Different Girls

Harper's Novelettes

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RICHARD LE GALLIENNE
THE LITTLE JOYS OF MARGARET

ELIZABETH JORDAN
KITTIE'S SISTER JOSEPHINE

ALICE BROWN
THE WIZARD'S TOUCH

CHARLES B. DE CAMP
THE BITTER CUP

MARY APPLEWHITE BACON
HIS SISTER

ELEANOR A. HALLOWELL
THE PERFECT YEAR

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS
EDITHA

OCTAVE THANET
THE STOUT MISS HOPKINS'S BICYCLE

MARY M. MEARS
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JULIAN RALPH
CORDELIA'S NIGHT OF ROMANCE

E. A. ALEXANDER
THE PRIZE-FUND BENEFICIARY

Introduction

It is many years now since the American Girl began to engage the consciousness of the American novelist. Before the expansive period following the Civil War, in the later eighteen-sixties and the earlier eighteen-seventies, she had of course been his heroine, unless he went abroad for one in court circles, or back for one in the feudal ages. Until the time noted, she had been a heroine and then an American girl. After that she was an American girl, and then a heroine; and she was often studied against foreign backgrounds, in contrast with other international figures, and her value ascertained in comparison with their valuelessness, though sometimes she was portrayed in those poses of flirtation of which she was born mistress. Even in these her superiority to all other kinds of girls was insinuated if not asserted.

The young ladies in the present col-

lection are all American girls but one, if we are to suppose Mr. Le Gallienne's winning type to be of the same English origin as himself. We can be surer of him than of her, however; but there is no question of the native Americanness of Mrs. Alexander's girl, who is done so strikingly to the life, with courage to grapple a character and a temperament as uncommon as it is true, which we have rarely found among our fictionists. Having said this, we must hedge in favor of Miss Jordan's most autochthonic Miss Kittie, so young a girl as to be still almost a little girl, and with a head full of the ideals of little-girlhood concerning young-girlhood. The pendant to her pretty picture is the study of elderly girlhood by Octave Thanet, or that by Miss Alice Brown, the one with its ideality, and the other with its humor. The pathos of "The Perfect Year" is as true as either in its truth to the girlhood which "never knew an earthly close," and yet had its fill of rapture. Julian Ralph's strong and free sketch contributes a fresh East Side flower, hollyhock-like in its gaudiness, to the garden of American girls, Irish-American in this case, but destined to be companioned hereafter by blossoms

of our Italian-American, Yiddish-American, and Russian-American civilization, as soon as our nascent novelists shall have the eye to see and the art to show them. Meantime, here are some of our Different Girls as far as they or their photographers have got, and their acquaintance is worth having.

W. D. H.

The Little Joys of Margaret

BY RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

MARGARET had seen her five sisters one by one leave the family nest, to set up little nests of their own. Her brother, the eldest child of a family of seven, had left the old home almost beyond memory, and settled in London. Now and again he made a flying visit to the small provincial town of his birth, and sometimes he sent two little daughters to represent him—for he was already a widowed man, and relied occasionally on the old roof-tree to replace the lost mother. Margaret had seen what sympathetic spectators called her "fate" slowly approaching for some time—particularly when, five years ago, she had broken off her engagement with a worthless boy. She had loved him deeply, and, had she loved him less, a refined girl in the provinces does not find it easy to replace a discarded suitor —for the choice of young men is not ex-

cessive. Her sisters had been more fortunate, and so, as I have said, one by one they left their father's door in bridal veils. But Margaret stayed on, and at length, as had been foreseen, became the sole nurse of a beautiful old invalid mother, a kind of lay sister in the nunnery of home.

She came of a beautiful family. In all the big family of seven there was not one without some kind of good looks. Two of her sisters were acknowledged beauties, and there were those who considered Margaret the most beautiful of all. It was all the harder, such sympathizers said, that her youth should thus fade over an invalid's couch, the bloom of her complexion be rubbed out by arduous vigils, and the lines prematurely etched in her skin by the strain of a self-denial proper, no doubt, to homely girls and professional nurses, but peculiarly wanton and wasteful in the case of a girl so beautiful as Margaret.

There are, alas! a considerable number of women predestined by their lack of personal attractiveness for the humbler tasks of life. Instinctively we associate them with household work, nursing, and the general drudgery of existence. One never dreams of their hav-

ing a life of their own. They have no accomplishments, nor any of the feminine charms. Women to whom an offer of marriage would seem as terrifying as a comet, they belong to the neutrals of the human hive, and are, practically speaking, only a little higher than the paid domestic. Indeed, perhaps their one distinction is that they receive no wages.

Now for so attractive a girl as Margaret to be merged in so dreary, undistinguished a class was manifestly preposterous. It was a stupid misapplication of human material. A plainer face and a more homespun fibre would have served the purpose equally well.

Margaret was by no means so much a saint of self-sacrifice as not to have realized her situation with natural human pangs. Youth only comes once—especially to a woman; and

> No hand can gather up the withered fallen petals of the Rose of youth.

Petal by petal, Margaret had watched the rose of her youth fading and falling. More than all her sisters, she was endowed with a zest for existence. Her superb physical constitution cried out for the joy of life. She was made to

be a great lover, a great mother; and to her, more than most, the sunshine falling in muffled beams through the lattices of her mother's sick-room came with a maddening summons to—live. She was so supremely fitted to play a triumphant part in the world outside there, so gay of heart, so victoriously vital.

At first, therefore, the renunciation, accepted on the surface with so kind a face, was a source of secret bitterness and hidden tears. But time, with its mercy of compensation, had worked for her one of its many mysterious transmutations, and shown her of what fine gold her apparently leaden days were made. She was now thirty-three; though, for all her nursing vigils, she did not look more than twenty-nine, and was now more than resigned to the loss of the peculiar opportunities of youth—if, indeed, they could be said to be lost already. "An old maid," she would say, "who has cheerfully made up her mind to be an old maid, is one of the happiest, and, indeed, most enviable, people in all the world."

Resent the law as we may, it is none the less true that renunciation brings with it a mysterious initiation, a finer insight. Its discipline would seem to refine and temper our organs of spiritual

perception, and thus make up for the commoner experience lost by a rarer experience gained. By dedicating herself to her sick mother, Margaret undoubtedly lost much of the average experience of her sex and age, but almost imperceptibly it had been borne in upon her that she made some important gains of a finer kind. She had been brought very close to the mystery of human life, closer than those who have nothing to do beyond being thoughtlessly happy can ever come. The nurse and the priest are initiates of the same knowledge. Each alike is a sentinel on the mysterious frontier between this world and the next. The nearer we approach that frontier, the more we understand not only of that world on the other side, but of the world on this. It is only when death throws its shadow over the page of life that we realize the full significance of what we are reading. Thus, by her mother's bedside, Margaret was learning to read the page of life under the illuminating shadow of death.

But, apart from any such mystical compensation, Margaret's great reward was that she knew her beautiful old mother better than any one else in the world knew her. As a rule, and par-

ticularly in a large family, parents remain half mythical to their children, awe-inspiring presences in the home, colossal figures of antiquity, about whose knees the younger generation crawls and gropes, but whose heads are hidden in the mists of prehistoric legend. They are like personages in the Bible. They impress our imagination, but we cannot think of them as being quite real. Their histories smack of legend. And this, of course, is natural, for they had been in the world, had loved and suffered, so long before us that they seem a part of that antenatal mystery out of which we sprang. When they speak of their old love-stories, it is as though we were reading Homer. It sounds so long ago. We are surprised at the vividness with which they recall happenings and personalities past and gone before, as they tell us, we were born. Before we were born! Yes! They belong to that mysterious epoch of time—"before we were born"; and unless we have a taste for history, or are drawn close to them by some sympathetic human exigency, as Margaret had been drawn to her mother, we are too apt, in the stress of making our own, to regard the history of our parents as dry-as-dust.

As the old mother sits there so quiet in her corner, her body worn to a silver thread, and hardly anything left of her but her indomitable eyes, it is hard, at least for a young thing of nineteen, all aflush and aflurry with her new party gown, to realize that that old mother is infinitely more romantic than herself. She has sat there so long, perhaps, as to have come to seem part of the inanimate furniture of home rather than a living being. Well! the young thing goes to her party, and dances with some callow youth who pays her clumsy compliments, and Margaret remains at home with the old mother in her corner. It is hard on Margaret! Yes; and yet, as I have said, it is thus she comes to know her old mother better than any one else knows her—society perhaps not so poor an exchange for that of smart, immature young men of one's own age.

As the door closes behind the important rustle of youthful laces, and Margaret and her mother are left alone, the mother's old eyes light up with an almost mischievous smile. If age seems humorous to youth, youth is even more humorous to age.

"It is evidently a great occasion, Peg," the old voice says, with the suspicion of

a gentle mockery. "Don't you wish you were going?"

"You naughty old mother!" answers Margaret, going over and kissing her.

The two understand each other.

"Well, shall we go on with our book?" says the mother, after a while.

"Yes, dear, in a moment. I have first to get you your diet, and then we can begin."

"Bother the diet!" says the courageous old lady; "for two pins I'd go to the ball myself. That old taffeta silk of mine is old enough to be in fashion again. What do you say, Peg, if you and I go to the ball together . . ."

"Oh, it's too much trouble dressing, mother. What do you think?"

"Well, I suppose it is," answers the mother. "Besides, I want to hear what happens next to those two beautiful young people in our book. So be quick with my old diet, and come and read . . ."

There is perhaps nothing so lovely or so well worth having as the gratitude of the old towards the young that care to give them more than the perfunctory ministrations to which they have long since grown sadly accustomed. There was no reward in the world that Margaret would have exchanged for the sweet

looks of her old mother, who, being no merely selfish invalid, knew the value and the cost of the devotion her daughter was giving her.

"I can give you so little, my child, for all you are giving me," her mother would sometimes say; and the tears would spring to Margaret's eyes.

Yes! Margaret had her reward in this alone—that she had cared to decipher the lined old document of her mother's face. Her other sisters had passed it by more or less impatiently. It was like some ancient manuscript in a museum, which only a loving and patient scholar takes the trouble to read. But the moment you begin to pick out the words, how its crabbed text blossoms with beautiful meanings and fascinating messages! It is as though you threw a dried rose into some magic water, and saw it unfold and take on bloom, and fill with perfume, and bring back the nightingale that sang to it so many years ago. So Margaret loved her mother's old face, and learned to know the meaning of every line on it. Privileged to see that old face in all its private moments of feeling, under the transient revivification of deathless memories, she was able, so to say, to reconstruct its perished beauty,

and realize the romance of which it was once the alluring candle. For her mother had been a very great beauty, and if, like Margaret, you are able to see it, there is no history so fascinating as the bygone love-affairs of old people. How much more fascinating to read one's mother's love-letters than one's own!

Even in the history of the heart recent events have a certain crudity, and love itself seems the more romantic for having lain in lavender for fifty years. A certain style, a certain distinction, beyond question go with antiquity, and to spend your days with a refined old mother is no less an education in style and distinction than to spend them in the air of old cities, under the shadow of august architecture and in the sunset of classic paintings.

The longer Margaret lived with her old mother, the less she valued the so-called "opportunities" she had missed. Coming out of her mother's world of memories, there seemed something small, even common, about the younger generation to which she belonged,—something lacking in significance and dignity.

For example, it had been her dream, as it is the dream of every true woman, to be a mother herself: and yet, somehow

—though she would not admit it in so many words—when her young married sisters came with their babies, there was something about their bustling and complacent domesticity that seemed to make maternity bourgeois. She had not dreamed of being a mother like that. She was convinced that her old mother had never been a mother like that. "They seem more like wet-nurses than mothers," she said to herself, with her wicked wit.

Was there, she asked herself, something in realization that inevitably lost you the dream? Was to incarnate an ideal to materialize it? Did the finer spirit of love necessarily evaporate like some volatile essence with marriage? Was it better to remain an idealistic spectator such as she—than to run the risks of realization?

She was far too beautiful, and had declined too many offers of commonplace marriage, for such questioning to seem the philosophy of disappointment. Indeed, the more she realized her own situation, the more she came to regard what others considered her sacrifice to her mother as a safeguard against the risk of a mediocre domesticity. Indeed, she began to feel a certain pride, as of a priestess, in the conservation of the dig-

nity of her nature. It is better to be a vestal virgin than—some mothers.

And, after all, the maternal instinct of her nature found an ideal outlet in her brother's children — the two little motherless girls who came every year to spend their holidays with their grandmother and their aunt Margaret.

Margaret had seen but little of their mother, but her occasional glimpses of her had left her with a haloed image of a delicate, spiritual face that grew more and more Madonna-like with memory. The nimbus of the Divine Mother, as she herself had dreamed of her, had seemed indeed to illumine that grave young face.

It pleased her imagination to take the place of that phantom mother, herself—a phantom mother. And who knows but that such dream-children, as she called those two little girls, were more satisfactory in the end than real children? They represented, so to say, the poetry of children. Had Margaret been a real mother, there would have been the prose of children as well. But here, as in so much else, Margaret's seclusion from the responsible activities of the outside world enabled her to gather the fine flower of existence without losing the sense

of it in the cares of its cultivation. I think that she comprehended the wonder and joy of children more than if she had been a real mother.

Seclusion and renunciation are great sharpeners and refiners of the sense of joy, chiefly because they encourage the habit of attentiveness.

"Our excitements are very tiny," once said the old mother to Margaret, "therefore we make the most of them."

"I don't agree with you, mother," Margaret had answered. "I think it is theirs that are tiny—trivial indeed, and ours that are great. People in the world lose the values of life by having too much choice; too much choice—of things not worth having. This makes them miss the real things—just as any one living in a city cannot see the stars for the electric lights. But we, sitting quiet in our corner, have time to watch and listen, when the others must hurry by. We have time, for instance, to watch that sunset yonder, whereas some of our worldly friends would be busy dressing to go out to a bad play. We can sit here and listen to that bird singing his vespers, as long as he will sing—and personally I wouldn't exchange him for a prima donna. Far from being poor in

excitements, I think we have quite as many as are good for us, and those we have are very beautiful and real."

"You are a brave child," answered her mother. "Come and kiss me," and she took the beautiful gold head into her hands and kissed her daughter with her sweet old mouth, so lost among wrinkles that it was sometimes hard to find it.

"But am I not right, mother?" said Margaret.

"Yes! you are right, dear, but you seem too young to know such wisdom."

"I have to thank you for it, darling," answered Margaret, bending down and kissing her mother's beautiful gray hair.

"Ah! little one," replied the mother, "it is well to be wise, but it is good to be foolish when we are young —and I fear I have robbed you of your foolishness."

"I shall believe you have if you talk like that," retorted Margaret, laughingly taking her mother into her arms and gently shaking her, as she sometimes did when the old lady was supposed to have been "naughty."

So for Margaret and her mother the days pass, and at first, as we have said, it may seem a dull life, and even a hard

one, for Margaret. But she herself has long ceased to think so, and she dreads the inevitable moment when the divine friendship between her and her old mother must come to an end. She knows, of course, that it must come, and that the day cannot be far off when the weary old limbs will refuse to make the tiny journeys from bedroom to rocking-chair, which have long been all that has been demanded of them; when the brave, humorous old eyes will be so weary that they cannot keep open any more in this world. The thought is one that is insupportably lonely, and sometimes she looks at the invalid-chair, at the cup and saucer in which she serves her mother's simple food, at the medicine-bottle and the measuring-glass, at the knitted shawl which protects the frail old form against draughts, and at all such sad furniture of an invalid's life, and pictures the day when the homely, affectionate use of all these things will be gone forever; for so poignant is humanity that it sanctifies with endearing associations even objects in themselves so painful and prosaic. And it seems to Margaret that when that day comes it would be most natural for her to go on the same journey with her mother.

For who shall fill for her her mother's place on earth—and what occupation will be left for Margaret when her "beautiful old *raison d'être*," as she sometimes calls her mother, has entered into the sleep of the blessed? She seldom thinks of that, for the thought is too lonely, and, meanwhile, she uses all her love and care to make this earth so attractive and cozy that the beautiful mother-spirit who has been so long prepared for her short journey to heaven may be tempted to linger here yet a little while longer. These ministrations, which began as a kind of renunciation, have now turned into an unselfish selfishness. Margaret began by feeling herself necessary to her mother; now her mother becomes more and more necessary to Margaret. Sometimes when she leaves her alone for a few moments in her chair, she laughingly bends over and says, "Promise me that you won't run away to heaven while my back is turned."

And the old mother smiles one of those transfigured smiles which seem only to light up the faces of those that are already half over the border of the spiritual world.

Winter is, of course, Margaret's time of chief anxiety, and then her loving ef-

forts are redoubled to detain her beloved spirit in an inclement world. Each winter passed in safety seems a personal victory over death. How anxiously she watches for the first sign of the returning spring, how eagerly she brings the news of early blade and bud, and with the first violet she feels that the danger is over for another year. When the spring is so afire that she is able to fill her mother's lap with a fragrant heap of crocus and daffodil, she dares at last to laugh and say,

"Now confess, mother, that you won't find sweeter flowers even in heaven."

And when the thrush is on the apple bough outside the window, Margaret will sometimes employ the same gentle raillery.

"Do you think, mother," she will say, "that an angel could sing sweeter than that thrush?"

"You seem very sure, Margaret, that I am going to heaven," the old mother will sometimes say, with one of her arch old smiles; "but do you know that I stole two peppermints yesterday?"

"You did!" says Margaret.

"I did indeed! and they have been on my conscience ever since."

"Really, mother! I don't know what to say," answers Margaret. "I had no idea that you are so wicked."

Many such little games the two play together, as the days go by; and often at bedtime, as Margaret tucks her mother into bed, she asks her:

"Are you comfortable, dear? Do you really think you would be much more comfortable in heaven?"

Or sometimes she will draw aside the window-curtains and say:

"Look at the stars, mother. . . . Don't you think we get the best view of them down here?"

So it is that Margaret persuades her mother to delay her journey a little while.

Kittie's Sister Josephine

BY ELIZABETH JORDAN

KITTIE JAMES told me this story about her sister Josephine, and when she saw my eye light up the way the true artist's does when he hears a good plot, she said I might use it, if I liked, the next time I "practised literature."

I don't think that was a very nice way to say it, especially when one remembers that Sister Irmingarde read three of my stories to the class in four months; and as I only write one every week, you can see yourself what a good average that was. But it takes noble souls to be humble in the presence of the gifted, and enthusiastic over their success, so only two of my classmates seemed really happy when Sister Irmingarde read my third story aloud. It is hardly necessary to mention the names of these beautiful natures, already so well known to my readers, but I will do it. They were Maudie Joyce

and Mabel Blossom, and they are my dearest friends at St. Catharine's. And some day, when I am a real writer and the name of May Iverson shines in gold letters on the tablets of fame, I'll write a book and dedicate it to them. Then, indeed, they will be glad they knew me in my schoolgirl days, and recognized real merit when they saw it, and did not mind the queer things my artistic temperament often makes me do. Oh, what a slave is one to this artistic, emotional nature, and how unhappy, how misunderstood! I don't mean that I am unhappy all the time, of course, but I have Moods. And when I have them life seems so hollow, so empty, so terrible! At such times natures that do not understand me are apt to make mistakes, the way Sister Irmingarde did when she thought I had nervous dyspepsia and made me walk three miles every day, when it was just Soul that was the matter with me. Still, I must admit the exercise helped me. It is so soothing, so restful, so calming to walk on dear nature's breast. Maudie Joyce and Mabel Blossom always know the minute an attack of artistic temperament begins in me. Then they go away quietly and reverently, and I write a story and feel better.

So this time I am going to tell about Kittie James's sister Josephine. In the very beginning I must explain that Josephine James used to be a pupil at St. Catharine's herself, ages and ages ago, and finally she graduated and left, and began to go into society and look around and decide what her life-work should be. That was long, long before our time—as much as ten years, I should think, and poor Josephine must be twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old now. But Kittie says she is just as nice as she can be, and not a bit poky, and so active and interested in life you'd think she was young. Of course I know such things can be, for my own sister Grace, Mrs. George R. Verbeck, is perfectly lovely and the most popular woman in the society of our city. But Grace is married, and perhaps that makes a difference. It is said that love keeps the spirit young. However, perhaps I'd better go on about Josephine and not dwell on that. Experienced as we girls are, and drinking of life in deep draughts though we do, we still admit—Maudie, Mabel, and I—that we do not yet know much about love. But one cannot know everything at fifteen, and, as Mabel Blossom always says, "there is

yet time." We all know just the kind of men they're going to be, though. Mine will be a brave young officer, of course, for a general's daughter should not marry out of the army, and he will die for his country, leaving me with a broken heart. Maudie Joyce says hers must be a man who will rule her with a rod of iron and break her will and win her respect, and then be gentle and loving and tender. And Mabel Blossom says she's perfectly sure hers will be fat and have a blond mustache and laugh a great deal. Once she said maybe none of us would ever get *any;* but the look Maudie Joyce and I turned upon her checked her thoughtless words. Life is bitter enough as it is without thinking of dreadful things in the future. I sometimes fear that underneath her girlish gayety Mabel Blossom conceals a morbid nature. But I am forgetting Josephine James. This story will tell why, with all her advantages of wealth and education and beauty, she remained a maiden lady till she was twenty-eight; and she might have kept on, too, if Kittie had not taken matters in hand and settled them for her.

Kittie says Josephine was always romantic and spent long hours of her young life in girlish reveries and dreams,

Of course that isn't the way Kittie said it, but if I should tell this story in her crude, unformed fashion, you wouldn't read very far. What Kittie really said was that Josephine used to "moon around the grounds a lot and bawl, and even try to write poetry." I understand Josephine's nature, so I will go on and tell this story in my own way, but you must remember that some of the credit belongs to Kittie and Mabel Blossom; and if Sister Irmingarde reads it in class, they can stand right up with me when the author is called for.

Well, when Josephine James graduated she got a lot of prizes and things, for she was a clever girl, and had not spent all her time writing poetry and thinking deep thoughts about life. She realized the priceless advantages of a broad and thorough education and of association with the most cultivated minds. That sentence comes out of our prospectus. Then she went home and went out a good deal, and was very popular and stopped writing poetry, and her dear parents began to feel happy and hopeful about her, and think she would marry and have a nice family, which is indeed woman's highest, noblest mission in life. But Josephine cherished an ideal.

A great many young men came to see her, and Kittie liked one of them very much indeed—better than all the others. He was handsome, and he laughed and joked a good deal, and always brought Kittie big boxes of candy and called her his little sister. He said she was going to be that in the end, anyhow, and there was no use waiting to give her the title that his heart dictated. He said it just that way. When he took Josephine out in his automobile he'd say, "Let's take the kid, too," and they would, and it did not take Kittie long to understand how things were between George Morgan—for that was indeed his name—and her sister. Little do grown-up people realize how intelligent are the minds of the young, and how keen and penetrating their youthful gaze! Clearly do I recall some things that happened at home, and it would startle papa and mamma to know I know them, but I will not reveal them here. Once I would have done so, in the beginning of my art; but now I have learned to finish one story before I begin another.

Little did Mr. Morgan and Josephine wot that every time she refused him Kittie's young heart burned beneath its sense of wrong, for she did refuse him

almost every time they went out together, and yet she kept right on going. You would think she wouldn't, but women's natures are indeed inscrutable. Some authors would stop here and tell what was in Josephine's heart, but this is not that kind of a story. Kittie was only twelve then, and they used big words and talked in a queer way they thought she would not understand; but she did, every time, and she never missed a single word they said. Of course she wasn't *listening* exactly, you see, because they knew she was there. That makes it different and quite proper. For if Kittie was more intelligent than her elders it was not the poor child's fault.

Things went on like that and got worse and worse, and they had been going on that way for five years. One day Kittie was playing tennis with George at the Country Club, and he had been very kind to her, and all of a sudden Kittie told him she knew all, and how sorry she was for him, and that if he would wait till she grew up she would marry him herself. The poor child was so young, you see, that she did not know how unmaidenly this was. And of course at St. Catharine's when they taught us how to enter and leave rooms and how to

act in society and at the table, they didn't think to tell us not to ask young men to marry us. I can add with confidence that Kittie James was the only girl who ever did. I asked the rest afterwards, and they were deeply shocked at the idea.

Well, anyhow, Kittie did it, and she said George was just as nice as he could be. He told her he had "never listened to a more alluring proposition" (she remembered just the words he used), and that she was "a little trump"; and then he said he feared, alas! it was impossible, as even his strong manhood could not face the prospect of the long and dragging years that lay between. Besides, he said, his heart was already given, and he guessed he'd better stick to Josephine, and would his little sister help him to get her? Kittie wiped her eyes and said she would. She had been crying. It must indeed be a bitter experience to have one's young heart spurned! But George took her into the club-house and gave her tea and lots of English muffins and jam, and somehow Kittie cheered up, for she couldn't help feeling there were still some things in life that were nice.

Of course after that she wanted dreadfully to help George, but there didn't

seem to be much she could do. Besides, she had to go right back to school in September, and being a studious child, I need hardly add that her entire mind was then given to her studies. When she went home for the Christmas holidays she took Mabel Blossom with her. Mabel was more than a year older, but Kittie looked up to her, as it is well the young should do to us older girls. Besides, Kittie had had her thirteenth birthday in November, and she was letting down her skirts a little and beginning to think of putting up her hair. She said when she remembered that she asked George to wait till she grew up it made her blush, so you see she was developing very fast.

As I said before, she took Mabel Blossom home for Christmas, and Mr. and Mrs. James were lovely to her, and she had a beautiful time. But Josephine was the best of all. She was just fine. Mabel told me with her own lips that if she hadn't seen Josephine James's name on the catalogue as a graduate in '93, she never would have believed she was so old. Josephine took the two girls to matinées and gave a little tea for them, and George Morgan was as nice as she was. He was always bringing them candy and violets, exactly as

if they were young ladies, and he treated them both with the greatest respect, and stopped calling them the kids when he found they didn't like it. Mabel got as fond of him as Kittie was, and they were both wild to help him to get Josephine to marry him; but she wouldn't, though Kittie finally talked to her long and seriously. I asked Kittie what Josephine said when she did that, and she confessed that Josephine had laughed so she couldn't say anything. That hurt the sensitive child, of course, but grown-ups are all too frequently thoughtless of such things. Had Josephine but listened to Kittie's words on that occasion, it would have saved Kittie a lot of trouble.

Now I am getting to the exciting part of the story. I am always so glad when I get to that. I asked Sister Irmingarde why one couldn't just make the story out of the exciting part, and she took a good deal of time to explain why, but she did not convince me; for besides having the artistic temperament I am strangely logical for one so young. Some day I shall write a story that is all climax from beginning to end. That will show her! But at present I must write according to the severe and cramping rules which she and literature have laid down.

One night Mrs. James gave a large party for Josephine, and of course Mabel and Kittie, being thirteen and fourteen, had to go to bed. It is such things as this that embitter the lives of schoolgirls. But they were allowed to go down and see all the lights and flowers and decorations before people began to come, and they went into the conservatory because that was fixed up with little nooks and things. They got away in and off in a kind of wing of it, and they talked and pretended they were *débutantes* at the ball, so they stayed longer than they knew. Then they heard voices, and they looked and saw Josephine and Mr. Morgan sitting by the fountain. Before they could move or say they were there, they heard him say this—Kittie remembers just what it was:

"I have spent six years following you, and you've treated me as if I were a dog at the end of a string. This thing must end. I must have you, or I must learn to live without you, and I must know now which it is to be. Josephine, you must give me my final answer to-night."

Wasn't it embarrassing for Kittie and Mabel? They did not want to listen, but some instinct told them Josephine

and George might not be glad to see them then, so they crept behind a lot of tall palms, and Mabel put her fingers in her ears so she wouldn't hear. Kittie didn't. She explained to me afterwards that she thought it being her sister made things kind of different. It was all in the family, anyhow. So Kittie heard Josephine tell Mr. Morgan that the reason she did not marry him was because he was an idler and without an ambition or a purpose in life. And she said she must respect the man she married as well as love him. Then George jumped up quickly and asked if she loved him, and she cried and said she did, but that she would never, never marry him until he did something to win her admiration and prove he was a man. You can imagine how exciting it was for Kittie to see with her own innocent eyes how grown-up people manage such things. She said she was so afraid she'd miss something that she opened them so wide they hurt her afterwards. But she didn't miss anything. She saw him kiss Josephine, too, and then Josephine got up, and he argued and tried to make her change her mind, and she wouldn't, and finally they left the conservatory. After that Kittie and Mabel crept out and rushed up-stairs.

The next morning Kittie turned to Mabel with a look on her face which Mabel had never seen there before. It was grim and determined. She said she had a plan and wanted Mabel to help her, and not ask any questions, but get her skates and come out. Mabel did, and they went straight to George Morgan's house, which was only a few blocks away. He was very rich and had a beautiful house. An English butler came to the door. Mabel said she was so frightened her teeth chattered, but he smiled when he saw Kittie, and said yes, Mr. Morgan was home and at breakfast, and invited them in. When George came in he had a smoking-jacket on, and looked very pale and sad and romantic, Mabel thought, but he smiled, too, when he saw them, and shook hands and asked them if they had breakfasted.

Kittie said yes, but they had come to ask him to take them skating, and they were all ready and had brought their skates. His face fell, as real writers say, and he hesitated a little, but at last he said he'd go, and he excused himself, just as if they had been grown up, and went off to get ready.

When they were left alone a terrible doubt assailed Mabel, and she asked Kit-

tie if she was going to ask George again to marry her. Kittie blushed and said she was not, of course, and that she knew better now. For it is indeed true that the human heart is not so easily turned from its dear object. We know that if once one truly loves it lasts forever and ever and ever, and then one dies and is buried with things the loved one wore.

Kittie said she had a plan to help George, and all Mabel had to do was to watch and keep on breathing. Mabel felt better then, and said she guessed she could do that. George came back all ready, and they started off. Kittie acted rather dark and mysterious, but Mabel conversed with George in the easy and pleasant fashion young men love. She told him all about school and how bad she was in mathematics; and he said he had been a duffer at it too, but that he had learned to shun it while there was yet time. And he advised her very earnestly to have nothing to do with it. Mabel didn't, either, after she came back to St. Catharine's; and when Sister Irmingarde reprcached her, Mabel said she was leaning on the judgment of a strong man, as woman should do. But Sister Irmingarde made her go on with the arithmetic just the same.

By and by they came to the river, and it was so early not many people were skating there. When George had fastened on their skates—he did it in the nicest way, exactly as if they were grown up—Kittie looked more mysterious than ever, and she started off as fast as she could skate toward a little inlet where there was no one at all. George and Mabel followed her. George said he didn't know whether the ice was smooth in there, but Kittie kept right on, and George did not say any more. I guess he did not care much where he went. I suppose it disappoints a man when he wants to marry a woman and she won't. Now that I am beginning to study deeply this question of love, many things are clear to me.

Kittie kept far ahead, and all of a sudden Mabel saw that a little distance further on, and just ahead, there was a big black hole in the ice, and Kittie was skating straight toward it. Mabel tried to scream, but she says the sound froze on her pallid lips. Then George saw the hole, too, and rushed toward Kittie, and quicker than I can write it Kittie went in that hole and down.

Mabel says George was there almost as soon, calling to Mabel to keep back out

of danger. Usually when people have to rescue others, especially in stories, they call to some one to bring a board, and some one does, and it is easy. But very often in real life there isn't any board or any one to bring it, and this was indeed the desperate situation that confronted my hero. There was nothing to do but plunge in after Kittie, and he plunged, skates and all. Then Mabel heard him gasp and laugh a little, and he called out: "It's all right, by Jove! The water isn't much above my knees." And even as he spoke Mabel saw Kittie rise in the water and sort of hurl herself at him and pull him down into the water, head and all. When they came up they were both half strangled, and Mabel was terribly frightened; for she thought George was mistaken about the depth, and they would both drown before her eyes; and then she would see that picture all her life, as they do in stories, and her hair would turn gray. She began to run up and down on the ice and scream; but even as she did so she heard these extraordinary words come from between Kittie James's chattering teeth:

"Now you are good and wet!"

George did not say a word. He confessed to Mabel afterwards that he

thought poor Kittie had lost her mind through fear. But he tried the ice till he found a place that would hold him, and he got out and pulled Kittie out. As soon as Kittie was out she opened her mouth and uttered more remarkable words.

"Now," she said, "I'll skate till we get near the club-house. Then you must pick me up and carry me, and I'll shut my eyes and let my head hang down. And Mabel must cry—good and hard. Then you must send for Josephine and let her see how you've saved the life of her precious little sister."

Mabel said she was sure that Kittie was crazy, and next she thought George was crazy, too. For he bent and stared hard into Kittie's eyes for a minute, and then he began to laugh, and he laughed till he cried. He tried to speak, but he couldn't at first; and when he did the words came out between his shouts of boyish glee.

"Do you mean to say, you young monkey," he said, "that this is a put-up job?"

Kittie nodded as solemnly as a fair young girl can nod when her clothes are dripping and her nose is blue with cold. When she did that, George roared again; then, as if he had remembered

something, he caught her hands and began to skate very fast toward the clubhouse. He was a thoughtful young man, you see, and he wanted her to get warm. Perhaps he wanted to get warm, too. Anyhow, they started off, and as they went, Kittie opened still further the closed flower of her girlish heart. I heard that expression once, and I've always wanted to get it into one of my stories. I think this is a good place.

She told George she knew the hole in the ice, and that it wasn't deep; and she said she had done it all to make Josephine admire him and marry him.

"She will, too," she said. "Her dear little sister—the only one she's got." And Kittie went on to say what a terrible thing it would have been if she had died in the promise of her young life, till Mabel said she almost felt sure herself that George had saved her. But George hesitated. He said it wasn't "a square deal," whatever that means, but Kittie said no one need tell any lies. She had gone into the hole and George had pulled her out. She thought they needn't explain how deep it was, and George admitted thoughtfully that "no truly loving family should hunger for statistics at such a moment." Finally he said:

"By Jove! I'll do it. All's fair in love and war." Then he asked Mabel if she thought she could "lend intelligent support to the star performers," and she said she could. So George picked Kittie up in his arms, and Mabel cried—she was so excited it was easy, and she wanted to do it all the time—and the sad little procession "homeward wended its weary way," as the poet says.

Mabel told me Kittie did her part like a real actress. She shut her eyes and her head hung over George's arm, and her long, wet braid dripped as it trailed behind them. George laughed to himself every few minutes till they got near the club-house. Then he looked very sober, and Mabel Blossom knew her cue had come, the way it does to actresses, and she let out a wail that almost made Kittie sit up. It was 'most too much of a one, and Mr. Morgan advised her to "tone it down a little," because, he said, if she didn't they'd probably have Kittie buried before she could explain. But of course Mabel had not been prepared and had not had any practice. She muffled her sobs after that, and they sounded lots better. People began to rush from the club-house, and get blankets and whiskey, and telephone for doctors and for Kit-

tie's family, and things got so exciting that nobody paid any attention to Mabel. All she had to do was to mop her eyes occasionally and keep a sharp lookout for Josephine; for of course, being an ardent student of life, like Maudie and me, she did not want to miss what came next.

Pretty soon a horse galloped up, all foaming at the mouth, and he was pulled back on his haunches, and Josephine and Mr. James jumped out of the buggy and rushed in, and there was more excitement. When George saw them coming he turned pale, Mabel said, and hurried off to change his clothes. One woman looked after him and said, "As modest as he is brave," and cried over it. When Josephine and Mr. James came in there was more excitement, and Kittie opened one eye and shut it again right off, and the doctor said she was all right except for the shock, and her father and Josephine cried, so Mabel didn't have to any more. She was glad, too, I can tell you.

They put Kittie to bed in a room at the club, for the doctor said she was such a high-strung child it would be wise to keep her perfectly quiet for a few hours and take precautions against pneumonia. Then Josephine went around asking for Mr. Morgan.

By and by he came down, in dry clothes but looking dreadfully uncomfortable. Mabel said she could imagine how he felt. Josephine was standing by the open fire when he entered the room, and no one else was there but Mabel. Josephine went right to him and put her arms around his neck.

"Dearest, dearest!" she said. "How can I ever thank you?" Her voice was very low, but Mabel heard it. George said right off, "There is a way." That shows how quick and clever he is, for some men might not think of it. Then Mabel Blossom left the room, with slow, reluctant feet, and went up-stairs to Kittie.

That's why Mabel has just gone to Kittie's home for a few days. She and Kittie are to be flower-maids at Josephine's wedding. I hope it is not necessary for me to explain to my intelligent readers that her husband will be George Morgan. Kittie says he confessed the whole thing to Josephine, and she forgave him, and said she would marry him anyhow; but she explained that she only did it on Kittie's account. She said she did not know to what lengths the child might go next.

So my young friends have gone to

mingle in scenes of worldly gayety, and I sit here in the twilight looking at the evening star and writing about love. How true it is that the pen is mightier than the sword! Gayety is well in its place, but the soul of the artist finds its happiness in work and solitude. I hope Josephine will realize, though, why I cannot describe her wedding. Of course no artist of delicate sensibilities could describe a wedding when she hadn't been asked to it.

Poor Josephine! It seems very, very sad to me that she is marrying thus late in life and only on Kittie's account. Why, oh, why could she not have wed when she was young and love was in her heart!

The Wizard's Touch

BY ALICE BROWN

JEROME WILMER sat in the garden, painting in a background, with the carelessness of ease. He seemed to be dabbing little touches at the canvas, as a spontaneous kind of fun not likely to result in anything serious, save, perhaps, the necessity of scrubbing them off afterwards, like a too adventurous child. Mary Brinsley, in her lilac print, stood a few paces away, the sun on her hair, and watched him.

"Paris is very becoming to you," she said at last.

"What do you mean?" asked Wilmer, glancing up, and then beginning to consider her so particularly that she stepped aside, her brows knitted, with an admonishing,

"Look out! you'll get me into the landscape."

"You're always in the landscape. What do you mean about Paris?"

"You look so—so travelled, so equal to any place, and Paris in particular because it's the finest."

Other people also had said that, in their various ways. He had the distinction set by nature upon a muscular body and a rather small head, well poised. His hair, now turning gray, grew delightfully about the temples, and though it was brushed back in the style of a man who never looks at himself twice when once will do, it had a way of seeming entirely right. His brows were firm, his mouth determined, and the close pointed beard brought his face to a delicate finish. Even his clothes, of the kind that never look new, had fallen into lines of easy use.

"You needn't guy me," he said, and went on painting. But he flashed his sudden smile at her. "Isn't New England becoming to me, too?"

"Yes, for the summer. It's overpowered. In the winter Aunt Celia calls you 'Jerry Wilmer.' She's quite topping then. But the minute you appear with European labels on your trunks and that air of speaking foreign lingo, she gives out completely. Every time she sees your name in the paper she forgets you went to school at the Academy and built the fires. She calls you 'our boarder'

then, for as much as a week and a half."

"Quit it, Mary," said he, smiling at her again.

"Well," said Mary, yet without turning, "I must go and weed a while."

"No," put in Wilmer, innocently; "he won't be over yet. He had a big mail. I brought it to him."

Mary blushed, and made as if to go. She was a woman of thirty-five, well poised, and sweet through wholesomeness. Her face had been cut on a regular pattern, and then some natural influence had touched it up beguilingly with contradictions. She swung back, after her one tentative step, and sobered.

"How do you think he is looking?" she asked.

"Prime."

"Not so—"

"Not so morbid as when I was here last summer," he helped her out. "Not by any means. Are you going to marry him, Mary?" The question had only a civil emphasis, but a warmer tone informed it. Mary grew pink under the morning light, and Jerome went on: "Yes, I have a perfect right to talk about it. I don't travel three thousand miles every summer to ask you to marry me without earning some claim to frank-

ness. I mentioned that to Marshby himself. We met at the station, you remember, the day I came. We walked down together. He spoke about my sketching, and I told him I had come on my annual pilgrimage, to ask Mary Brinsley to marry me."

"Jerome!"

"Yes, I did. This is my tenth pilgrimage. Mary, will you marry me?"

"No," said Mary, softly, but as if she liked him very much. "No, Jerome."

Wilmer squeezed a tube on his palette and regarded the color frowningly. "Might as well, Mary," said he. "You'd have an awfully good time in Paris."

She was perfectly still, watching him, and he went on:

"Now you're thinking if Marshby gets the consulate you'll be across the water anyway, and you could run down to Paris and see the sights. But it wouldn't be the same thing. It's Marshby you like, but you'd have a better time with me."

"It's a foregone conclusion that the consulship will be offered him," said Mary. Her eyes were now on the path leading through the garden and over the wall to the neighboring house where Marshby lived.

"Then you will marry and go with him.

Ah, well, that's finished. I needn't come another summer. When you are in Paris, I can show you the boulevards and cafés."

"It is more than probable he won't accept the consulship."

"Why?" He held his palette arrested in mid-air and stared at her.

"He is doubtful of himself—doubtful whether he is equal to so responsible a place."

"Bah! it's not an embassy."

"No; but he fancies he has not the address, the social gifts—in fact, he shrinks from it." Her face had taken on a soft distress; her eyes appealed to him. She seemed to be confessing, for the other man, something that might well be misunderstood. Jerome, ignoring the flag of her discomfort, went on painting, to give her room for confidence.

"Is it that old plague-spot?" he asked. "Just what aspect does it bear to him? Why not talk freely about it?"

"It is the old remorse. He misunderstood his brother when they two were left alone in the world. He forced the boy out of evil associations when he ought to have led him. You know the rest of it. The boy was desperate. He killed himself."

"When he was drunk. Marshby wasn't responsible."

"No, not directly. But you know that kind of mind. It follows hidden causes. That's why his essays are so good. Anyway, it has crippled him. It came when he was too young, and it marked him for life. He has an inveterate self-distrust."

"Ah, well," said Wilmer, including the summer landscape in a wave of his brush, "give up the consulship. Let him give it up. It isn't as if he hadn't a roof. Settle down in his house there, you two, and let him write his essays, and you—just be happy."

She ignored her own part in the prophecy completely and finally. "It isn't the consulship as the consulship," she responded. "It is the life abroad I want for him. It would give him—well, it would give him what it has given you. His work would show it." She spoke hotly, and at once Jerome saw himself envied for his brilliant cosmopolitan life, the bounty of his success fairly coveted for the other man. It gave him a curious pang. He felt, somehow, impoverished, and drew his breath more meagrely. But the actual thought in his mind grew too big to be suppressed, and he stayed his hand to look at her.

"That's not all," he said.

"All what?"

"That's not the main reason why you want him to go. You think if he really asserted himself, really knocked down the spectre of his old distrust and stamped on it, he would be a different man. If he had once proved himself, as we say of younger chaps, he could go on proving."

"No," she declared, in nervous loyalty. She was like a bird fluttering to save her nest. "No! You are wrong. I ought not to have talked about him at all. I shouldn't to anybody else. Only, you are so kind."

"It's easy to be kind," said Jerome, gently, "when there's nothing else left us."

She stood wilfully swaying a branch of the tendrilled arbor, and, he subtly felt, so dissatisfied with herself for her temporary disloyalty that she felt alien to them both: Marshby because she had wronged him by admitting another man to this intimate knowledge of him, and the other man for being her accomplice.

"Don't be sorry," he said, softly. "You haven't been naughty."

But she had swung round to some comprehension of what he had a right to feel.

"It makes one selfish," she said, "to want—to want things to come out right."

"I know. Well, can't we make them come out right? He is sure of the consulship?"

"Practically."

"You want to be assured of his taking it."

She did not answer; but her face lighted, as if to a new appeal. Jerome followed her look along the path. Marshby himself was coming. He was no weakling. He swung along easily with the stride of a man accustomed to using his body well. He had not, perhaps, the urban air, and yet there was nothing about him which would not have responded at once to a more exacting civilization. Jerome knew his face,—knew it from their college days together and through these annual visits of his own; but now, as Marshby approached, the artist rated him not so much by the friendly as the professional eye. He saw a man who looked the scholar and the gentleman, keen though not imperious of glance. His visage, mature even for its years, had suffered more from emotion than from deeds or the assaults of fortune. Marshby had lived the life of thought, and, exaggerating action, had failed to fit himself to any form of it. Wilmer glanced at his hands, too, as they

swung with his walk, and then remembered that the professional eye had already noted them and laid their lines away for some suggestive use. As he looked, Marshby stopped in his approach, caught by the singularity of a gnarled tree limb. It awoke in him a cognizance of nature's processes, and his face lighted with the pleasure of it.

"So you won't marry me?" asked Wilmer, softly, in that pause.

"Don't!" said Mary.

"Why not, when you won't tell whether you're engaged to him or not? Why not, anyway? If I were sure you'd be happier with me, I'd snatch you out of his very maw. Yes, I would. Are you sure you like him, Mary?"

The girl did not answer, for Marshby had started again. Jerome got the look in her face, and smiled a little, sadly.

"Yes," he said, "you're sure."

Mary immediately felt unable to encounter them together. She gave Marshby a good-morning, and, to his bewilderment, made some excuse about her weeding and flitted past him on the path. His eyes followed her, and when they came back to Wilmer the artist nodded brightly.

"I've just asked her," he said.

"Asked her?" Marshby was about to pass him, pulling out his glasses and at the same time peering at the picture with the impatience of his near-sighted look.

"There, don't you do that!" cried Jerome, stopping, with his brush in air. "Don't you come round and stare over my shoulder. It makes me nervous as the devil. Step back there—there by that mullein. So! I've got to face my protagonist. Yes, I've been asking her to marry me."

Marshby stiffened. His head went up, his jaw tightened. He looked the jealous ire of the male.

"What do you want me to stand here for?" he asked, irritably.

"But she refused me," said Wilmer, cheerfully. "Stand still, that's a good fellow. I'm using you."

Marshby had by an effort pulled himself together. He dismissed Mary from his mind, as he wished to drive her from the other man's speech.

"I've been reading the morning paper on your exhibition," he said, bringing out the journal from his pocket. "They can't say enough about you."

"Oh, can't they! Well, the better for me. What are they pleased to discover?"

"They say you see round corners and through deal boards. Listen." He struck open the paper and read: "'A man with a hidden crime upon his soul will do well to elude this greatest of modern magicians. The man with a secret tells it the instant he sits down before Jerome Wilmer. Wilmer does not paint faces, brows, hands. He paints hopes, fears, and longings. If we could, in our turn, get to the heart of his mystery! If we could learn whether he says to himself: "I see hate in that face, hypocrisy, greed. I will paint them. That man is not man, but cur. He shall fawn on my canvas." Or does he paint through a kind of inspired carelessness, and as the line obeys the eye and hand, so does the emotion live in the line?'"

"Oh, gammon!" snapped Wilmer.

"Well, do you?" said Marshby, tossing the paper to the little table where Mary's work-box stood.

"Do I what? Spy and then paint, or paint and find I've spied? Oh, I guess I plug along like any other decent workman. When it comes to that, how do you write your essays?"

"I! Oh! That's another pair of sleeves. Your work is colossal. I'm still on cherry-stones."

"Well," said Wilmer, with slow incisiveness, "you've accomplished one thing I'd sell my name for. You've got Mary Brinsley bound to you so fast that neither lure nor lash can stir her. I've tried it—tried Paris even, the crudest bribe there is. No good! She won't have me."

At her name, Marshby straightened again, and there was fire in his eye. Wilmer, sketching him in, seemed to gain distinct impulse from the pose, and worked the faster.

"Don't move," he ordered. "There, that's right. So, you see, you're the successful chap. I'm the failure. She won't have me." There was such feeling in his tone that Marshby's expression softened comprehendingly. He understood a pain that prompted even such a man to rash avowal.

"I don't believe we'd better speak of her," he said, in awkward kindliness.

"I want to," returned Wilmer. "I want to tell you how lucky you are."

Again that shade of introspective bitterness clouded Marshby's face. "Yes," said he, involuntarily. "But how about her? Is *she* lucky?"

"Yes," replied Jerome, steadily. "She's got what she wants. She won't worship you any the less because you don't wor-

ship yourself. That's the mad way they have—women. It's an awful challenge. You've got a fight before you, if you don't refuse it."

"God!" groaned Marshby to himself, "it is a fight. I can't refuse it."

Wilmer put his question without mercy. "Do you want to?"

"I want her to be happy," said Marshby, with a simple humility afar from cowardice. "I want her to be safe. I don't see how anybody could be safe—with me."

"Well," pursued Wilmer, recklessly, "would she be safe with me?"

"I think so," said Marshby, keeping an unblemished dignity. "I have thought that for a good many years."

"But not happy?"

"No, not happy. She would— We have been together so long."

"Yes, she'd miss you. She'd die of homesickness. Well!" He sat contemplating Marshby with his professional stare; but really his mind was opened for the first time to the full reason for Mary's unchanging love. Marshby stood there so quiet, so oblivious of himself in comparison with unseen things, so much a man from head to foot, that he justified the woman's loyal passion as

nothing had before. "Shall you accept the consulate?" Wilmer asked, abruptly.

Brought face to face with fact, Marshby's pose slackened. He drooped perceptibly. "Probably not," he said. "No, decidedly not."

Wilmer swore under his breath, and sat, brows bent, marvelling at the change in him. The man's infirmity of will had blighted him. He was so truly another creature that not even a woman's unreasoning championship could pull him into shape again.

Mary Brinsley came swiftly down the path, trowel in one hand and her basket of weeds in the other. Wilmer wondered if she had been glancing up from some flowery screen and read the story of that altered posture. She looked sharply anxious, like a mother whose child is threatened. Jerome shrewdly knew that Marshby's telltale attitude was no unfamiliar one.

"What have you been saying?" she asked, in laughing challenge, yet with a note of anxiety underneath.

"I'm painting him in," said Wilmer; but as she came toward him he turned the canvas dexterously. "No," said he, "no. I've got my idea from this. Tomorrow Marshby's going to sit."

That was all he would say, and Mary put it aside as one of his pleasantries made to fit the hour. But next day he set up a big canvas in the barn that served him as workroom, and summoned Marshby from his books. He came dressed exactly right, in his every-day clothes that had comfortable wrinkles in them, and easily took his pose. For all his concern over the inefficiency of his life, as a life, he was entirely without self-consciousness in his personal habit. Jerome liked that, and began to like him better as he knew him more. A strange illuminative process went on in his mind toward the man as Mary saw him, and more and more he nursed a fretful sympathy with her desire to see Marshby tuned up to some pitch that should make him livable to himself. It seemed a cruelty of nature that any man should so scorn his own company and yet be forced to keep it through an allotted span. In that sitting Marshby was at first serious and absent-minded. Though his body was obediently there, the spirit seemed to be busy somewhere else.

"Head up!" cried Jerome at last, brutally. "Heavens, man, don't skulk!"

Marshby straightened under the blow. It hit harder, as Jerome meant it should,

than any verbal rallying. It sent the man back over his own life to the first stumble in it.

"I want you to look as if you heard drums and fife," Jerome explained, with one of his quick smiles, that always wiped out former injury.

But the flush was not yet out of Marshby's face, and he answered, bitterly, "I might run."

"I don't mind your looking as if you'd like to run and knew you couldn't," said Jerome, dashing in strokes now in a happy certainty.

"Why couldn't I?" asked Marshby, still from that abiding scorn of his own ways.

"Because you can't, that's all. Partly because you get the habit of facing the music. I should like—" Wilmer had an unconsidered way of entertaining his sitters, without much expenditure to himself; he pursued a fantastic habit of talk to keep their blood moving, and did it with the eye of the mind unswervingly on his work. "If I were you, I'd do it. I'd write an essay on the muscular habit of courage. Your coward is born weak-kneed. He shouldn't spill himself all over the place trying to put on the spiritual make-up of a hero. He must

simply strengthen his knees. When they'll take him anywhere he requests, without buckling, he wakes up and finds himself a field-marshal. *Voilà!*"

"It isn't bad," said Marshby, unconsciously straightening. "Go ahead, Jerome. Turn us all into field-marshals."

"Not all," objected Wilmer, seeming to dash his brush at the canvas with the large carelessness that promised his best work. "The jobs wouldn't go round. But I don't feel the worse for it when I see the recruity stepping out, promotion in his eye."

After the sitting, Wilmer went yawning forward, and with a hand on Marshby's shoulder, took him to the door.

"Can't let you look at the thing," he said, as Marshby gave one backward glance. "That's against the code. Till it's done, no eye touches it but mine and the light of heaven."

Marshby had no curiosity. He smiled, and thereafter let the picture alone, even to the extent of interested speculation. Mary had scrupulously absented herself from that first sitting; but after it was over and Marshby had gone home, Wilmer found her in the garden, under an apple-tree, shelling pease. He lay down on the ground, at a little distance, and

watched her. He noted the quick, capable turn of her wrist and the dexterous motion of the brown hands as they snapped out the pease, and he thought how eminently sweet and comfortable it would be to take this bit of his youth back to France with him, or even to give up France and grow old with her at home.

"Mary," said he, "I sha'n't paint any picture of you this summer."

Mary laughed, and brushed back a yellow lock with the back of her hand. "No," said she, "I suppose not. Aunt Celia spoke of it yesterday. She told me the reason."

"What is Aunt Celia's most excellent theory?"

"She said I'm not so likely as I used to be."

"No," said Jerome, not answering her smile in the community of mirth they always had over Aunt Celia's simple speech. He rolled over on the grass and began to make a dandelion curl. "No, that's not it. You're a good deal likelier than you used to be. You're all possibilities now. I could make a Madonna out of you, quick as a wink. No, it's because I've decided to paint Marshby instead."

Mary's hands stilled themselves, and

she looked at him anxiously. "Why are you doing that?" she asked.

"Don't you want the picture?"

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Give it to you, I guess. For a wedding-present, Mary."

"You mustn't say those things," said Mary, gravely. She went on working, but her face was serious.

"It's queer, isn't it," remarked Wilmer, after a pause, "this notion you've got that Marshby's the only one that could possibly do? I began asking you first."

"Please!" said Mary. Her eyes were full of tears. That was rare for her, and Wilmer saw it meant a shaken poise. She was less certain to-day of her own fate. It made her more responsively tender toward his. He sat up and looked at her.

"No," he said. "No. I won't ask you again. I never meant to. Only I have to speak of it once in a while. We should have such a tremendously good time together."

"We have a tremendously good time now," said Mary, the smile coming while she again put up the back of her hand and brushed her eyes. "When you're good."

"When I help all the other little boys at the table, and don't look at the nice heart-shaped cake I want myself? It's frosted, and got little pink things all over the top. There! don't drop the corners of your mouth. If I were asked what kind of a world I'd like to live in, I'd say one where the corners of Mary's mouth keep quirked up all the time. Let's talk about Marshby's picture. It's going to be your Marshby."

"What do you mean?"

"Not Marshby's Marshby—yours."

"You're not going to play some dreadful joke on him?" Her eyes were blazing under knotted brows.

"Mary!" Wilmer spoke gently, and though the tone recalled her, she could not forbear at once, in her hurt pride and loyalty.

"You're not going to put him into any masquerade?—to make him anything but what he is?"

"Mary, don't you think that's a little hard on an old chum?"

"I can't help it." Her cheeks were hot, though now it was with shame. "Yes, I am mean, jealous, envious. I see you with everything at your feet—"

"Not quite everything," said Jerome. "I know it makes you hate me."

"No! no!" The real woman had awakened in her, and she turned to him in a whole-hearted honesty. "Only, they say you do such wizard things when you paint. I never saw any of your pictures, you know, except the ones you did of me. And they're not *me*. They're lovely—angels with women's clothes on. Aunt Celia says if I looked like that I'd carry all before me. But, you see, you've always been—partial to me."

"And you think I'm not partial to Marshby?"

"It isn't that. It's only that they say you look inside people and drag out what is there. And inside him—oh, you'd see his hatred of himself!" The tears were rolling unregarded down her face.

"This is dreadful," said Wilmer, chiefly to himself. "Dreadful."

"There!" said Mary, drearily, emptying the pods from her apron into the basket at her side. "I suppose I've done it now. I've spoiled the picture."

"No," returned Jerome, thoughtfully, "you haven't spoiled the picture. Really I began it with a very definite conception of what I was going to do. It will be done in that way or not at all."

"You're very kind," said Mary, humbly. "I didn't mean to act like this."

"No,"—he spoke out of a maze of reflection, not looking at her. "You have an idea he's under the microscope with me. It makes you nervous."

She nodded, and then caught herself up.

"There's nothing you mightn't see," she said, proudly, ignoring her previous outburst. "You or anybody else, even with a microscope."

"No, of course not. Only you'd say microscopes aren't fair. Well, perhaps they're not. And portrait-painting is a very simple matter. It's not the black art. But if I go on with this, you are to let me do it in my own way. You're not to look at it."

"Not even when you're not at work?"

"Not once, morning, noon, or night, till I invite you to. You were always a good fellow, Mary. You'll keep your word."

"No, I won't look at it," said Mary.

Thereafter she stayed away from the barn, not only when he was painting, but at other times, and Wilmer missed her. He worked very fast, and made his plans for sailing, and Aunt Celia loudly bemoaned his stinginess in cutting short the summer. One day, after breakfast, he sought out Mary again in the garden.

She was snipping Coreopsis for the dinner table, but she did it absently, and Jerome noted the heaviness of her eyes.

"What's the trouble?" he asked, abruptly, and she was shaken out of her late constraint. She looked up at him with a piteous smile.

"Nothing much," she said. "It doesn't matter. I suppose it's fate. He has written his letter."

"Marshby?"

"You knew he got his appointment?"

"No; I saw something had him by the heels, but he's been still as a fish."

"It came three days ago. He has decided not to take it. And it will break his heart."

"It will break your heart," Wilmer opened his lips to say; but he dared not jostle her mood of unconsidered frankness.

"I suppose I expected it," she went on. "I did expect it. Yet he's been so different lately, it gave me a kind of hope."

Jerome started. "How has he been different?" he asked.

"More confident, less doubtful of himself. It's not anything he has said. It's in his speech, his walk. He even carries his head differently, as if he had a right to. Well, we talked half the night last

night, and he went home to write the letter. He promised me not to mail it till he'd seen me once more; but nothing will make any difference."

"You won't beseech him?"

"No. He is a man. He must decide."

"You won't tell him what depends on it?"

"Nothing depends on it," said Mary, calmly. "Nothing except his own happiness. I shall find mine in letting him accept his life according to his own free will."

There was something majestic in her mental attitude. Wilmer felt how noble her maturity was to be, and told himself, with a thrill of pride, that he had done well to love her.

"Marshby is coming," he said. "I want to show you both the picture."

Mary shook her head. "Not this morning," she told him, and he could see how meagre canvas and paint must seem to her after her vision of the body of life. But he took her hand.

"Come," he said, gently; "you must."

Still holding her flowers, she went with him, though her mind abode with her lost cause. Marshby halted when he saw them coming, and Jerome had time to look at him. The man held himself

wilfully erect, but his face betrayed him. It was haggard, smitten. He had not only met defeat; he had accepted it. Jerome nodded to him and went on before them to the barn. The picture stood there in a favoring light. Mary caught her breath sharply, and then all three were silent. Jerome stood there forgetful of them, his eyes on his completed work, and for the moment he had in it the triumph of one who sees intention brought to fruitage under perfect auspices. It meant more to him, that recognition, than any glowing moment of his youth. The scroll of his life unrolled before him, and he saw his past, as other men acclaimed it, running into the future ready for his hand to make. A great illumination touched the days to come. Brilliant in promise, they were yet barren of hope. For as surely as he had been able to set this seal on Mary's present, he saw how the thing itself would separate them. He had painted her ideal of Marshby; but whenever in the future she should nurse the man through the mental sickness bound always to delay his march, she would remember this moment with a pang, as something Jerome had dowered him with, not something he had attained unaided. Marshby faced

them from the canvas, erect, undaunted, a soldier fronting the dawn, expectant of battle, yet with no dread of its event. He was not in any sense alien to himself. He dominated, not by crude force, but through the sustained inward strength of him. It was not youth Jerome had given him. There was maturity in the face. It had its lines—the lines that are the scars of battle; but somehow not one suggested, even to the doubtful mind, a battle lost. Jerome turned from the picture to the man himself, and had his own surprise. Marshby was transfigured. He breathed humility and hope. He stirred at Wilmer's motion.

"Am I"—he glowed—"could I have looked like that?" Then in the poignancy of the moment he saw how disloyal to the moment it was even to hint at what should have been, without snapping the link now into the welding present. He straightened himself and spoke brusquely, but to Mary:

"I'll go back and write that letter. Here is the one I wrote last night."

He took it from his pocket, tore it in two, and gave it to her. Then he turned away and walked with the soldier's step home. Jerome could not look at her. He began moving back the picture.

"There!" he said, "it's finished. Better make up your mind where you'll have it put. I shall be picking up my traps this morning."

Then Mary gave him his other surprise. Her hands were on his shoulders. Her eyes, full of the welling gratitude that is one kind of love, spoke like her lips.

"Oh!" said she, "do you think I don't know what you've done? I couldn't take it from anybody else. I couldn't let him take it. It's like standing beside him in battle; like lending him your horse, your sword. It's being a comrade. It's helping him fight. And he *will* fight. That's the glory of it!"

The Bitter Cup

BY CHARLES B. DE CAMP

CLARA LEEDS sat by the open window of her sitting-room with her fancy work. Her hair was done up in an irreproachable style, and her finger-nails were carefully manicured and pink like little shells. She had a slender waist, and looked down at it from time to time with satisfied eyes. At the back of her collar was a little burst of chiffon; for chiffon so arranged was the fashion. She cast idle glances at the prospect from the window. It was not an alluring one—a row of brick houses with an annoying irregularity of open and closed shutters.

There was the quiet rumble of a carriage in the street, and Clara Leeds leaned forward, her eyes following the vehicle until to look further would have necessitated leaning out of the window. There were two women in the carriage, both young and soberly dressed. To cer-

tain eyes they might have appeared out of place in a carriage, and yet, somehow, it was obvious that it was their own. Clara Leeds resumed her work, making quick, jerky stitches.

"Clara Leeds," she murmured, as if irritated. She frowned and then sighed. "If only — if only it was something else; if it only had two syllables. . . ." She put aside her work and went and stood before the mirror of her dresser. She looked long at her face. It was fresh and pretty, and her blue eyes, in spite of their unhappy look, were clear and shining. She fingered a strand of hair, and then cast critical sidelong glances at her profile. She smoothed her waist-line with a movement peculiar to women. Then she tilted the glass and regarded the reflection from head to foot.

"Oh, what is it?" she demanded, distressed, of herself in the glass. She took up her work again.

"They don't seem to care how they look and . . . they do wear shabby gloves and shoes." So her thoughts ran. "But they are the Rockwoods and they don't have to care. It must be so easy for them; they only have to visit the Day Nursery, and the Home for Incurables, and some old, poor, sick people. They

never have to meet them and ask them to dinner. They just say a few words and leave some money or things in a nice way, and they can go home and do what they please." Clara Leeds's eyes rested unseeingly on the house opposite. "It must be nice to have a rector . . . he is such an intellectual-looking man, so quiet and dignified; just the way a minister should be, instead of like Mr. Copple, who tries to be jolly and get up sociables and parlor meetings." There were tears in the girl's eyes.

A tea-bell rang, and Clara went downstairs to eat dinner with her father. He had just come in and was putting on a short linen coat. Clara's mother was dead. She was the only child at home, and kept house for her father.

"I suppose you are all ready for the lawn-tennis match this afternoon?" said Mr. Leeds to his daughter. "Mr. Copple said you were going to play with him. My! that young man is up to date. Think of a preacher getting up a lawn-tennis club! Why, when I was a young man that would have shocked people out of their boots. But it's broad-minded, it's broad-minded," with a wave of the hand. "I like to see a man with ideas, and if lawn-tennis will help to keep our

boys out of sin's pathway, why, then, lawn-tennis is a strong, worthy means of doing the Lord's work."

"Yes," said Clara. "Did Mr. Copple say he would call for me? It isn't necessary."

"Oh yes, yes," said her father; "he said to tell you he would be around here at two o'clock. I guess I'll have to go over myself and see part of the athletics. We older folks ain't quite up to taking a hand in the game, but we can give Copple our support by looking in on you and cheering on the good work."

After dinner Mr. Leeds changed the linen coat for a cutaway and started back to his business. Clara went up-stairs and put on a short skirt and tennis shoes. She again surveyed herself in the mirror. The skirt certainly hung just like the model. She sighed and got out her tennis-racquet. Then she sat down and read in a book of poems that she was very fond of.

At two o'clock the bell jangled, and Clara opened the door for Mr. Copple herself. The clergyman was of slight build, and had let the hair in front of his ears grow down a little way on his cheeks. He wore a blue yachting-cap, and white duck trousers which were rolled up and

displayed a good deal of red and black sock. For a moment Clara imaged a clear-cut face with grave eyes above a length of clerical waistcoat, on which gleamed a tiny gold cross suspended from a black cord.

"I guess we might as well go over," she said. "I'm all ready."

The clergyman insisted on carrying Clara's racquet. "You are looking very well," he said, somewhat timidly, but with admiring eyes. "But perhaps you don't feel as much like playing as you look."

"Oh yes, I do indeed," replied Clara, inwardly resenting the solicitude in his tone.

They set out, and the clergyman appeared to shake his mind free of a preoccupation.

"I hope all the boys will be around," he said, with something of anxiety. "They need the exercise. All young, active fellows ought to have it. I spoke to Mr. Goodloe and Mr. Sharp and urged them to let Tom and Fred Martin off this afternoon. I think they will do it. Ralph Carpenter, I'm afraid, can't get away from the freight-office, but I am in hopes that Mr. Stiggins can take his place. Did you know that Mrs. Thompson has promised to donate some lemonade?"

"That's very nice," said Clara. "It's a lovely day for the match." She was thinking, "What short steps he takes!"

After some silent walking the clergyman said: "I don't believe you know, Miss Leeds, how much I appreciate your taking part in these tennis matches. Somehow I feel that it is asking a great deal of you, for I know that you have—er—so many interests of your own—that is, you are different in many ways from most of our people. I want you to know that I am grateful for the influence—your cooperation, you know—"

"Please, Mr. Copple, don't mention it," said Clara, hurriedly. "I haven't so many interests as you imagine, and I am not any different from the rest of the people. Not at all." If there was any hardness in the girl's tone the clergyman did not appear to notice it. They had reached their destination.

The tennis-court was on the main street just beyond the end of the business section. It was laid out on a vacant lot between two brick houses. A wooden sign to one side of the court announced, "First ——— Church Tennis Club." When Clara and Mr. Copple arrived at the court there were a number of young people gathered in the lot. Most of them

had tennis-racquets, those of the girls being decorated with bows of yellow, black, and lavender ribbon. Mr. Copple shook hands with everybody, and ran over the court several times, testing the consistency of the earth.

"Everything is capital!" he cried.

Clara Leeds bowed to the others, shaking hands with only one or two. They appeared to be afraid of her. The finals in the men's singles were between Mr. Copple and Elbert Dunklethorn, who was called "Ellie." He wore a very high collar, and as his shoes had heels, he ran about the court on his toes.

Clara, watching him, recalled her father's words at dinner. "How will this save that boy from sin's pathway?" she thought. She regarded the clergyman; she recognized his zeal. But why, why must she be a part of this—what was it?—this system of saving people and this kind of people? If she could only go and be good to poor and unfortunate people whom she wouldn't have to know. Clara glanced toward the street. "I hope they won't come past," she said to herself.

The set in which Clara and the clergyman were partners was the most exciting of the afternoon. The space on either

side of the court was quite filled with spectators. Some of the older people who had come with the lengthening shadows sat on chairs brought from the kitchens of the adjoining houses. Among them was Mr. Leeds, his face animated. Whenever a ball went very high up or very far down the lot, he cried, "Hooray!" Clara was at the net facing the street, when the carriage she had observed in the morning stopped in view, and the two soberly dressed women leaned forward to watch the play. Clara felt her face burn, and when they cried "game," she could not remember whether the clergyman and she had won it or lost it. She was chiefly conscious of her father's loud "hoorays." With the end of the play the carriage was driven on.

Shortly before supper-time that evening Clara went to the drug-store to buy some stamps. One of the Misses Rockwood was standing by the show-case waiting for the clerk to wrap up a bottle. Clara noted the scantily trimmed hat and the scuffed gloves. She nodded in response to Miss Rockwood's bow. They had met but once.

"That was a glorious game of tennis you were having this afternoon," said Miss Rockwood, with a warm smile. "My

sister and I should like to have seen more of it. You all seemed to be having such a good time."

"*You all—*"

Clara fumbled her change. "It's—it's good exercise," she said. That night she cried herself to sleep.

II

The rector married the younger Miss Rockwood. To Clara Leeds the match afforded painfully pleasurable feeling. It was so eminently fitting; and yet it was hard to believe that any man could see anything in Miss Rockwood. His courtship had been in keeping with the man, dignified and yet bold. Clara had met them several times together. She always hurried past. The rector bowed quietly. He seemed to say to all the world, "I have chosen me a woman." His manner defied gossip; there was none that Clara heard. This immunity of theirs distilled the more bitterness in her heart because gossip was now at the heels of her and Mr. Copple, following them as chickens do the feed-box. She knew it from such transmissions as, "But doubtless Mr. Copple has already told you," or, "You ought to know, if any one does."

It had been some time apparent to Clara

that the minister held her in a different regard from the other members of his congregation. His talks with her were more personal; his manner was bashfully eager. He sought to present the congeniality of their minds. Mr. Copple had a nice taste in poetry, but somehow Clara, in after-reading, skipped those poems that he had read aloud to her. On several occasions she knew that a declaration was imminent. She extricated herself with a feeling of unspeakable relief. It would not be a simple matter to refuse him. Their relations had been peculiar, and to tell him that she did not love him would not suffice in bringing them to an end. Mr. Copple was odious to her. She could not have explained why clearly, yet she knew. And she would have blushed in the attempt to explain why; it would have revealed a detestation of her lot. Clara had lately discovered the meaning of the word "plebeian"; more, she believed she comprehended its applicableness. The word was a burr in her thoughts. Mr. Copple was the personification of the word. Clara had not repulsed him. You do not do that sort of thing in a small town. She knew intuitively that the clergyman

would not be satisfied with the statement that he was not loved. She also knew that he would extract part, at least, of the real reason from her. It is more painful for a lover to learn that he is not liked than that he is not loved. Clara did not wish to cause him pain.

She was spared the necessity. The minister fell from a scaffolding on the new church and was picked up dead.

Clara's position was pitiful. Sudden death does not grow less shocking because of its frequency. Clara shared the common shock, but not the common grief. Fortunately, as hers was supposed to be a peculiar grief, she could manifest it in a peculiar way. She chose silence. The shock had bereft her of much thought. Death had laid a hand over the mouth of her mind. But deep down a feeling of relief swam in her heart. She gave it no welcome, but it would take no dismissal.

About a week after the funeral, Clara, who walked out much alone, was returning home near the outskirts of town. The houses were far apart, and between them stretched deep lots fringed with flowered weeds man-high. A level sun shot long golden needles through the blanched maple-trees, and the street beneath them was filled with lemon-colored

light. The roll of a light vehicle approaching from behind grew distinct enough to attract Clara's attention. "It is Mrs. Custer coming back from the Poor Farm," she thought. It was Mrs. Everett Custer, who was formerly the younger Miss Rockwood, and she was coming from the Poor Farm. The phaeton came into Clara's sight beside her at the curb. As she remarked it, Mrs. Custer said, in her thin, sympathetic voice, "Miss Leeds, won't you drive with me back to town? I wish you would."

An excuse rose instinctively to Clara's lips. She was walking for exercise. But suddenly a thought came to her, and after a moment's hesitation, she said: "You are very kind. I am a little tired." She got into the phaeton, and the sober horse resumed his trot down the yellow street.

Clara's thought was: "Why shouldn't I accept? She is too well bred to sympathize with me, and perhaps, now that I am free, I can get to know her and show her that I am not just the same as all the rest, and perhaps I'll get to going with her sort of people."

She listened to the rhythm of the horse's hoof-beats, and was not a little uneasy. Mrs. Custer remarked the beauty of the late afternoon, the glorious sym-

phonies of color in sky and tree, in response to which Clara said, "Yes, indeed," and, "Isn't it?" between long breaths. She was about to essay a question concerning the Poor Farm, when Mrs. Custer began to speak, at first faltering, in a tone that sent the blood out of Clara's face and drew a sudden catching pain down her breast.

"I—really, Miss Leeds, I want to say something to you and I don't quite know how to say it, and yet it is something I want very much for you to know." Mrs. Custer's eyes looked the embarrassment of unencouraged frankness. "I know it is presumptuous for me, almost a stranger, to speak to you, but I feel so deeply on the matter—Everett—Mr. Custer feels so deeply— My dear Miss Leeds, I want you to know what a grief his loss was to us. Oh, believe me, I am not trying to sympathize with you. I have no right to do that. But if you could know how Mr. Custer always regarded Mr. Copple! It might mean something to you to know that. I don't think there was a man for whom he expressed greater admiration— than what, I mean, he expressed to me. He saw in him all that he lacked himself. I am telling you a great deal. It is difficult for my husband to go among men in

that way—in the way *he* did. And yet he firmly believes that the Kingdom of God can only be brought to men by the ministers of God going among them and being of them. He envied Mr. Copple his ability to do that, to know his people as one of them, to take part in their—their sports and all that. You don't know how he envied him and admired him. And his admiration was my admiration. He brought me to see it. I envied you, too—your opportunity to help your people in an intimate, real way which seemed so much better than mine. I don't know why it is my way, but I mean going about as I do, as I did to-day to the Poor Farm. It seems so perfunctory.

"Don't misunderstand me, Miss Leeds," and Mrs. Custer laid a hand on Clara's arm. "There is no reason why you should care what Mr. Custer and I think about your—about our—all our very great loss. But I felt that it must be some comfort for you to know that we, my husband and I, who might seem indifferent — not that — say unaffected by what has happened,—feel it very, very deeply; and to know that his life, which I can't conceive of as finished, has left a deep, deep print on ours."

The phaeton was rolling through fre-

quented streets. It turned a corner as Mrs. Custer ceased speaking.

"I—I must get out here," said Clara Leeds. "You needn't drive me. It is only a block to walk."

"Miss Leeds, forgive me—" Mrs. Custer's lips trembled with compassion.

"Oh, there isn't anything—it isn't that—good night." Clara backed down to the street and hurried off through the dusk. And as she went tears dropped slowly to her cheeks—cold, wretched tears.

His Sister

BY MARY APPLEWHITE BACON

"BUT you couldn't see me leave, mother, anyway, unless I was there to go."

It was characteristic of the girl adjusting her new travelling-hat before the dim little looking-glass that, while her heart was beating with excitement which was strangely like grief, she could give herself at once to her stepmother's inquietude and turn it aside with a jest.

Mrs. Morgan, arrested in her anxious movement towards the door, stood for a moment taking in the reasonableness of Stella's proposition, and then sank back to the edge of her chair. "The train gets here at two o'clock," she argued.

Lindsay Cowart came into the room, his head bent over the satchel he had been mending. "You had better say good-by to Stella here at the house, mother," he suggested; "there's no use for you to walk down to the depot in the hot sun."

And then he noticed that his stepmother had on her bonnet with the veil to it—she had married since his father's death and was again a widow,—and, in extreme disregard of the September heat, was dressed in the black worsted of a diagonal weave which she wore only on occasions which demanded some special tribute to their importance.

She began smoothing out on her knees the black gloves which, in her nervous haste to be going, she had been holding squeezed in a tight ball in her left hand. "I can get there, I reckon," she answered with mild brevity, and as if the young man's words had barely grazed her consciousness.

A moment later she went to the window and, with her back to Lindsay, poured the contents of a small leather purse into one hand and began to count them softly.

He looked up again. "I am going to pay for Stella's ticket, mother. You must not do it," he said.

She replaced the money immediately, but without impatience, and as acquiescing in his assumption of his sister's future. "You have done so much already," he apologized; but he knew that she was hurt, and chafed to feel that only

the irrational thing on his part would have seemed to her the kind one.

Stella turned from the verdict of the dim looking-glass upon her appearance to that of her brother's face. As she stood there in that moment of pause, she might have been the type of all innocent and budding life. The delicacy of floral bloom was in the fine texture of her skin, the purple of dewy violets in her soft eyes; and this new access of sadness, which was as yet hardly conscious of itself, had thrown over the natural gayety of her young girlhood something akin to the pathetic tenderness which veils the earth in the dawn of a summer morning.

He felt it to be so, but dimly; and, young himself and already strained by the exactions of personal desires, he answered only the look of inquiry in her face,—"Will the merchants here never learn any taste in dry-goods?"

Instantly he was sick with regret. Of what consequence was the too pronounced blue of her dress in comparison with the light of happiness in her dear face? How impossible for him to be here for even these few hours without running counter to some cherished illusion or dear habit of speech or manner.

"I tell you it's time we were going," Mrs. Morgan appealed, her anxiety returning.

"We have thirty-five minutes yet," Lindsay said, looking at his watch; but he gathered up the bags and umbrellas and followed as she moved ponderously to the door.

Stella waited until they were out in the hall, and then looked around the room, a poignant tenderness in her eyes. There was nothing congruous between its shabby walls and cheap worn furniture and her own beautiful young life; but the heart establishes its own relations, and tears rose suddenly to her eyes and fell in quick succession. Even so brief a farewell was broken in upon by her stepmother's call, and pressing her wet cheek for a moment against the discolored door-facing, she hurried out to join her.

Lindsay did not at first connect the unusual crowd in and around the little station with his sister's departure; but the young people at once formed a circle around her, into which one and another older person entered and retired again with about the same expressions of affectionate regret and good wishes. He had known them all so long! But, except for the growing up of the younger

boys and girls during his five years of absence, they were to him still what they had been since he was a child, affecting him still with the old depressing sense of distance and dislike. The grammarless speech of the men, the black-rimmed nails of Stella's schoolmaster—a good classical scholar, but heedless as he was good-hearted,—jarred upon him, indeed, with the discomfort of a new experience. Upon his own slender, erect figure, clothed in poor but well-fitting garments, gentleman was written as plainly as in words, just as idealist was written on his forehead and the other features which thought had chiselled perhaps too finely for his years.

The brightness had come back to Stella's face, and he could not but feel grateful to the men who had left their shops and dingy little stores to bid her good-by, and to the placid, kindly-faced women ranged along the settees against the wall and conversing in low tones about how she would be missed; but the noisy flock of young people, who with their chorus of expostulations, assurances, and prophecies seemed to make her one of themselves, filled him with strong displeasure. He knew how foolish it would be for him to show it, but he could

get no further in his effort at concealment than a cold silence which was itself significant enough. A tall youth with bold and handsome features and a pretty girl in a showy red muslin ignored him altogether, with a pride which really quite overmatched his own; but the rest shrank back a little as he passed looking after the checks and tickets, either cutting short their sentences at his approach or missing the point of what they had to say. The train seemed to him long in coming.

His stepmother moved to the end of the settee and made a place for him at her side. "Lindsay," she said, under cover of the talk and laughter, and speaking with some difficulty, "I hope you will be able to carry out all your plans for yourself and Stella; but while you're making the money, she will have to make the friends. Don't you ever interfere with her doing it. From what little I have seen of the world, it's going to take both to carry you through."

His face flushed a little, but he recognized her faithfulness and did it honor. "That is true, mother, and I will remember what you say. But I have some friends," he added, in enforced self-vindication, "in Vaucluse if not here."

A whistle sounded up the road. She caught his hand with a swift accession of tenderness towards his youth. "You've done the best you could, Lindsay," she said. "I wish you well, my son, I wish you well." There were tears in her eyes.

George Morrow and the girl in red followed Stella into the car, not at all disconcerted at having to get off after the train was in motion. "Don't forget me, Stella," the girl called back. "Don't you ever forget Ida Brand!"

There was a waving of hands and handkerchiefs from the little station, aglare in the early afternoon sun. A few moments later the train had rounded a curve, shutting the meagre village from sight, and, to Lindsay Cowart's thought, shutting it into a remote past as well.

He arose and began rearranging their luggage. "Do you want these?" he inquired, holding up a bouquet of dahlias, scarlet sage, and purple petunias, and thinking of only one answer as possible.

"I will take them," she said, as he stood waiting her formal consent to drop them from the car window. Her voice was quite as usual, but something in her face suggested to him that this going away from her childhood's home might be a different thing to her from what he had

conceived it to be. He caught the touch of tender vindication in her manner as she untied the cheap red ribbon which held the flowers together and rearranged them into two bunches so that the jarring colors might no longer offend, and felt that the really natural thing for her to do was to weep, and that she only restrained her tears for his sake. Sixteen was so young! His heart grew warm and brotherly towards her youth and inexperience; but, after all, how infinitely better that she should have cause for this passing sorrow.

He left her alone, but not for long. He was eager to talk with her of the plans about which he had been writing her the two years since he himself had been a student at Vaucluse, of the future which they should achieve together. It seemed to him only necessary for him to show her his point of view to have her adopt it as her own; and he believed, building on her buoyancy and responsiveness of disposition, that nothing he might propose would be beyond the scope of her courage.

"It may be a little lonely for you at first," he told her. "There are only a handful of women students at the college, and all of them much older than

you; but it is your studies at last that are the really important thing, and I will help you with them all I can. Mrs. Bancroft will have no other lodgers and there will be nothing to interrupt our work."

"And the money, Lindsay?" she asked, a little anxiously.

"What I have will carry us through this year. Next summer we can teach and make almost enough for the year after. The trustees are planning to establish a fellowship in Greek, and if they do and I can secure it—and Professor Wayland thinks I can,—that will make us safe the next two years until you are through."

"And then?"

He straightened up buoyantly. "Then your two years at Vassar and mine at Harvard, with some teaching thrown in along the way, of course. And then Europe—Greece—all the great things!"

She smiled with him in his enthusiasm. "You are used to such bold thoughts. It is too high a flight for me all at once."

"It will not be, a year from now," he declared, confidently.

A silence fell between them, and the noise of the train made a pleasant accompaniment to his thoughts as he

sketched in detail the work of the coming months. But always as a background to his hopes was that honorable social position which he meant eventually to achieve, the passion for which was a part of his Southern inheritance. Little as he had yet participated in any interests outside his daily tasks, he had perceived in the old college town its deeply grained traditions of birth and custom, perceived and respected them, and discounted the more their absence in the sorry village he had left. Sometime when he should assail it, the exclusiveness of his new environment might beat him back cruelly, but thus far it existed for him only as a barrier to what was ultimately precious and desirable. One day the gates would open at his touch, and he and the sister of his heart should enter their rightful heritage.

The afternoon waned. He pointed outside the car window. "See how different all this is from the part of the State which we have left," he said. "The landscape is still rural, but what mellowness it has; because it has been enriched by a larger, more generous human life. One can imagine what this whole section must have been in those old days, before the coming of war and desolation. And Vau-

cluse was the flower, the centre of it all!" His eye kindled. "Some day external prosperity will return, and then Vaucluse and her ideals will be needed more than ever; it is she who must hold in check the commercial spirit, and dominate, as she has always done, the material with the intellectual." There was a noble emotion in his face, reflecting itself in the younger countenance beside his own. Poor, young, unknown, their hearts thrilled with pride in their State, with the possibility that they also should give to her of their best when the opportunity should be theirs.

"It is a wonderful old town," Lindsay went on again. "Even Wayland says so, —our Greek professor, you know." His voice thrilled with the devotion of the hero-worshipper as he spoke the name. "He is a Harvard man, and has seen the best of everything, and even he has felt the charm of the place; he told me so. You will feel it, too. It is just as if the little town and the college together had preserved in amber all that was finest in our Southern life. And now to think you and I are to share in all its riches!"

His early consecration to such a purpose, the toil and sacrifice by which it had been achieved, came movingly before her;

yet, mingled with her pride in him, something within her pleaded for the things which he rated so low. "It used to be hard for you at home, Lindsay," she said, softly.

"Yes, it was hard." His face flushed. "I never really lived till I left there. I was like an animal caught in a net, like a man struggling for air. You can't know what it is to me now to be with people who are thinking of something else than of how to make a few dollars in a miserable country store."

"But they were good people in Bowersville, Lindsay," she urged, with gentle loyalty.

"I am sure they were, if you say so," he agreed. "But at any rate we are done with it all now." He laid his hand over hers. "At last I am going to take you into our own dear world."

It was, after all, a very small world as to its actual dimensions, but to the brother it had the largeness of opportunity, and to Stella it seemed infinitely complex. She found security at first only in following minutely the programme which Lindsay had laid out for her. It was his own as well, and simple enough. Study was the supreme thing; exercise came in as a necessity, pleasure only as the rarest

incident. She took all things cheerfully, after her nature, but after two or three months the color began to go from her cheeks, the elasticity from her step; nor was her class standing, though creditable, quite what her brother had expected it to be.

Wayland detained him one day in his class-room. "Do you think your sister is quite happy here, Cowart?" he asked.

The boy thrilled, as he always did at any special evidence of interest from such a source, but he had never put this particular question to himself and had no reply at hand.

"I have never thought this absolute surrender to books the wisest thing for you," Wayland went on; "but for your sister it is impossible. She was formed for companionship, for happiness, not for the isolation of the scholar. Why did you not put her into one of the girls' schools of the State, where she would have had associations more suited to her years?" he asked, bluntly.

Lindsay could scarcely believe that he was listening to the young professor whose scholarly attainments seemed to him the sum of what was most desirable in life. "Our girls' colleges are very superficial," he answered; "and even if

they were not, she could get no Greek in any of them."

"My dear boy," Wayland said, "the amount of Greek which your sister knows or doesn't know will always be a very unimportant matter; she has things that are so infinitely more valuable to give to the world. And deserves so much better things for herself," he added, drawing together his texts for the next recitation.

Lindsay returned to Mrs. Bancroft's quiet, old-fashioned house in a sort of daze. "Stella," he said, "do you think you enter enough into the social side of our college life?"

"No," she answered. "But I think neither of us does."

"Well, leave me out of the count. If I get through my Junior year as I ought, I am obliged to grind; and when there is any time left, I feel that I must have it for reading in the library. But it needn't be so with you. Didn't an invitation come to you for the reception Friday evening?"

Her face grew wistful. "I don't care to go to things, Lindsay, unless you will go with me," she said.

Nevertheless, he had his way, and when once she made it possible, opportunities for social pleasures poured in upon her.

As Wayland had said, she was formed for friendship, for joy; and that which was her own came to her unsought. She was by nature too simple and sweet to be spoiled by the attention she received; the danger perhaps was the less because she missed in it all the comradeship of her brother, without which in her eyes the best things lost something of their charm. It was not merely personal ambition which kept him at his books; the passion of the scholar was upon him and made him count all moments lost that were spent away from them. Sometimes Stella sought him as he pored over them alone, and putting her arm shyly about him, would beg that he would go with her for a walk, or a ride on the river; but almost always his answer was the same: "I am so busy, Stella dear; if you knew how much I have to do you would not even ask me."

There was one interruption, indeed, which the young student never refused. Sometimes their Greek professor dropped in at Mrs. Bancroft's to bring or to ask for a book; sometimes, with the lovely coming of the spring, he would join them as they were leaving the college grounds, and lead them away into some of the woodland walks, rich in wild

flowers, that environed the little town. Such hours seemed to both brother and sister to have a flavor, a brightness, quite beyond what ordinary life could give. Wayland, too, must have found in them his own share of pleasure, for he made them more frequent as the months went by.

It was in the early spring of her second year at Vaucluse that the accident occurred. The poor lad who had taken her out in the boat was almost beside himself with grief and remorse.

"We had enjoyed the afternoon so much," he said, trying to tell how it had happened. "I thought I had never seen her so happy, so gay,—but you know she was that always. It was nearly sunset, and I remember how she spoke of the light as we saw it through the open spaces of the woods and as it slanted across the water. Farther down the river the yellow jasmine was beginning to open. A beech-tree that leaned out over the water was hung with it. She wanted some, and I guided the boat under the branches. I meant to get it for her myself, but she was reaching up after it almost before I knew it. The bough that had the finest blossoms on it was just beyond her reach,

and while I steadied the boat, she pulled it towards her by one of the vines hanging from it. She must have put too much weight on it—

"It all happened so quickly. I called to her to be careful, but while I was saying the words the vine snapped and she fell back with such force that the boat tipped, and in a second we were both in the water. I knew I could not swim, but I hoped that the water so near the bank would be shallow; and it was, but there was a deep hole under the roots of the tree."

He could get no further. Poor lad! the wonder was that he had not been drowned himself. A negro ploughing in the field near by saw the accident and ran to his help, catching him as he was sinking for the third time. Stella never rose after she went down; her clothing had been entangled in the roots of the beech.

Sorrow for the young life cut off so untimely was deep and universal, and sought to manifest itself in tender ministrations to the brother so cruelly bereaved. But Lindsay shrank from all offices of sympathy, and except for seeking now and then Wayland's silent companionship, bore his grief alone.

The college was too poor to establish

the fellowship in Greek, but the adjunct professor in mathematics resigned, and young Cowart was elected to his place, with the proviso that he give two months further study to the subject in the summer school of some university. Wayland decided which by taking him back with him to Cambridge, where he showed the boy an admirable friendship.

Lindsay applied himself to his special studies with the utmost diligence. It was impossible, moreover, that his new surroundings should not appeal to his tastes in many directions; but in spite of his response to these larger opportunities, his friend discerned that the wound which the young man kept so carefully hidden had not, after all these weeks, begun even slightly to heal.

Late on an August night, impelled as he often was to share the solitude which Lindsay affected, he sought him at his lodgings, and not finding him, followed what he knew was a favorite walk with the boy, and came upon him half hidden under the shadows of an elm in the woods that skirted Mount Auburn. "I thought you might be here," he said, taking the place that Lindsay made for him on the seat. Many words were never necessary between them.

The moon was full and the sky cloudless, and for some time they sat in silence, yielding to the tranquil loveliness of the scene and to that inner experience of the soul brooding over each, and more inscrutable than the fathomless vault above them.

"I suppose we shall never get used to a midnight that is still and at the same time lustrous, as this is to-night," Wayland said. "The sense of its uniqueness is as fresh whenever it is spread before us as if we had never seen it before."

It was but a part of what he meant. He was thinking how sorrow, the wide sense of personal loss, was in some way like the pervasiveness, the voiceless speech, of this shadowed radiance around them.

He drew a little nearer the relaxed and slender figure beside his own. "It is of *her* you are thinking, Lindsay," he said, gently, and mentioning for the first time the young man's loss. "All that you see seems saturated with her memory. I think it will always be so—scenes of exceptional beauty, moments of high emotion, will always bring her back."

The boy's response came with difficulty: "Perhaps so. I do not know. I think the thought of her is always with me."

"If so, it should be for strength, for comfort," his friend pleaded. "She herself brought only gladness wherever she came."

There was something unusual in his voice, something that for a moment raised a vague questioning in Lindsay's mind; but absorbed as he was in his own sadness, it eluded his feeble inquiry. To what Wayland had said he could make no reply.

"Perhaps it is the apparent waste of a life so beautiful that seems to you so intolerable—" He felt the strong man's impulse to arrest an irrational grief, and groped for the assurance he desired. "Yet, Lindsay, we know things are not wasted; not in the natural world, not in the world of the spirit." But on the last words his voice lapsed miserably, and he half rose to go.

Lindsay caught his arm and drew him back. "Don't go yet," he said, brokenly. "I know you think it would help me if I would talk about—Stella; if I should tell it all out to you. I thank you for being willing to listen. Perhaps it will help me."

He paused, seeking for some words in which to express the sense of poverty which scourged him. Of all who had loved his sister, he himself was left poor-

est! Others had taken freely of her friendship, had delighted themselves in her face, her words, her smile, had all these things for memories. He had been separated from her, in part by the hard conditions of their youth, and at the last, when they had been together, by his own will. Oh, what had been her inner life during these last two years, when it had gone on beside his own, while he was too busy to attend?

But the self-reproach was too bitter for utterance to even the kindest of friends. "I thought I could tell you," he said at last, "but I can't. Oh, Professor Wayland," he cried, "there is an element in my grief that is peculiar to itself, that no one else in sorrow ever had!"

"I think every mourner on earth would say that, Lindsay." Again the younger man discerned the approach of a mystery, but again he left it unchallenged.

The professor rose to his feet. "Good night," he said; "unless you will go back with me. Even with such moonlight as this, one must sleep." He had dropped to that kind level of the commonplace by which we spare ourselves and one another.

"'Where the love light never, never dies,'"

The boy's voice ringing out blithely through the drip and dampness of the winter evening marked his winding route across the college grounds. Lindsay Cowart, busy at his study table, listened without definite effort and placed the singer as the lad newly come from the country. He could have identified any other of the Vaucluse students by connections as slight—Marchman by his whistling, tender, elusive sounds, flute notes sublimated, heard only when the night was late and the campus still; others by tricks of voice, fragments of laughter, by their footfalls, even, on the narrow brick walk below his study window. Such the easy proficiency of affection.

Attention to the lad's singing suddenly was lifted above the subconscious. The simple melody had entangled itself in some forgotten association of the professor's boyhood, seeking to marshal which before him, he received the full force of the single line sung in direct ear-shot. Like the tune, the words also became a challenge; pricked through the unregarded heaviness in which he was plying his familiar task, and demanded that he should name its cause.

For him the love light of his marriage had been dead so long! No, not dead;

nothing so dignified, so tragic. Burnt down, smoldered; suffocated by the hateful dust of the commonplace. There was a touch of contempt in the effort with which he dismissed the matter from his mind and turned back to his work. And yet, he stopped a moment longer to think, for him life without the light of love fell so far below its best achievement!

The front of his desk was covered with the papers in mathematics over which he had spent his evenings for more than a week. Most of them had been corrected and graded, with the somewhat full comment or elucidation here and there which had made his progress slow. He examined a half-dozen more, and then in sheer mental revolt against the subject, slipped them under the rubber bands with others of their kind and dropped the neat packages out of his sight into one of the drawers of the desk. Wayland's book on Greece, the fruit of eighteen months' sojourn there, had come through the mail on the same day when the calculus papers had been handed in, and he had read it through at once, not to be teased intolerably by its invitation. He had mastered the text, avid through the long winter night, but he picked it up again now, and for a little while studied the

sumptuous illustrations. How long Wayland had been away from Vaucluse, how much of enrichment had come to him in the years since he had left! He himself might have gone also, to larger opportunities—he had chosen to remain, held by a sentiment! The professor closed the book with a little sigh, and taking it to a small shelf on the opposite side of the room, stood it with a half-dozen others worthy of such association.

Returning, he got together before him the few Greek authors habitually in hand's reach, whether handled or not, and from a compartment of his desk took out several sheets of manuscript, metrical translations from favorite passages in the tragedists or the short poems of the Anthology. Like the rest of the Vaucluse professors—a mere handful they were,—he was straitened by the hard exactions of class-room work, and the book which he hoped sometime to publish grew slowly. How far he was in actual miles from the men who were getting their thoughts into print, how much farther in environment! Things which to them were the commonplaces of a scholar's life were to him impossible luxuries; few even of their books found their way to his shelves. At least the original sources of inspiration

were his, and sometimes he felt that his verses were not without spirit, flavor.

He took up a little volume of Theocritus, which opened easily at the Seventh Idyl, and began to read aloud. Half-way through the poem the door opened and his wife entered. He did not immediately adjust himself to the interruption, and she remained standing a few moments in the centre of the room.

"Thank you; I believe I will be seated," she said, the sarcasm in her words carefully excluded from her voice.

He wondered that she should find interest in so sorry a game. "I thought you felt enough at home in here to sit down without being asked," he said, rising, and trying to speak lightly.

She took the rocking-chair he brought for her and leaned back in it without speaking. Her maroon-colored evening gown suggested that whoever planned it had been somewhat straitened by economy, but it did well by her rich complexion and creditable figure. Her features were creditable too, the dark hair a little too heavy, perhaps, and the expression, defined as it is apt to be when one is thirty-five, not wholly satisfying. In truth, the countenance, like the gown, suffered a little from economy, a sparse-

ness of the things one loves best in a woman's face. Half the sensitiveness belonging to her husband's eyes and mouth would have made her beautiful.

"It is a pity the Barkers have such a bad night for their party," Cowart said.

"The reception is at the Fieldings';" and again he felt himself rebuked.

"I'm afraid I didn't think much about the matter after you told me the Dillinghams were coming by for you in their carriage. Fortunately neither family holds us college people to very strict social account."

"They have their virtues, even if they are so vulgar as to be rich."

"Why, I believe I had just been thinking, before you came in, that it is only the rich who have any virtues at all." He managed to speak genially, but the consciousness that she was waiting for him to make conversation, as she had waited for the chair, stiffened upon him like frost.

He cast about for something to say, but the one interest which he would have preferred to keep to himself was all that presented itself to his grasp. "I have often thought," he suggested, "that if only we were in sight of the Gulf, our landscape in early summer might not be very unlike that of ancient Greece." She

looked at him a little blankly, and he drew one of his books nearer and began turning its leaves.

"I thought you were correcting your mathematics papers."

"I am, or have been; but I am reading Theocritus, too."

"Well, I don't see anything in a day like this to make anybody think of summer. The dampness goes to your very marrow."

"It isn't the day; it's the poetry. That's the good of there being poetry."

She skipped his parenthesis. "And you keep this room as cold as a vault." Not faultfinding, but a somewhat irritating concern for his comfort was in the complaint.

She went to the hearth and in her efficient way shook down the ashes from the grate and heaped it with coal. A cabinet photograph of a girl in her early teens, which had the appearance of having just been put there, was supported against a slender glass vase. Mrs. Cowart took it up and examined it critically. "I don't think this picture does Arnoldina justice," she said. "One of the eyes seems to droop a little, and the mouth looks sad. Arnoldina never did look sad."

They were on common ground now, and he could speak without constraint. "I hadn't observed that it looked sad. She seems somehow to have got a good deal older since September."

"She is maturing, of course." All a mother's pride and approbation were in the reserve of the speech. To have put more definitely her estimate of the sweet young face would have been a clumsy thing in comparison.

Lindsay's countenance lighted up. He arose, and standing by his wife, looked over her shoulder as she held the photograph to the light. "Do you know, Gertrude," he said, "there is something in her face that reminds me of Stella?"

"I don't know that I see it," she answered, indifferently, replacing the photograph and returning to her chair. The purpose which had brought her to the room rose to her face. "I stopped at the warehouse this afternoon," she said, "and had a talk with father. Jamieson really goes to Mobile—the first of next month. The place is open to you if you want it."

"But, Gertrude, how should I possibly want it?" he expostulated.

"You would be a member of the firm. You might as well be making money as the rest of them."

He offered no comment.

"It is not now like it was when you were made professor. The town has become a commercial centre and its educational interests have declined. The professors will always have their social position, of course, but they cannot hope for anything more."

"It is not merely Vaucluse, but the South, that is passing into this phase. But economic independence has become a necessity. When once it is achieved, our people will turn to higher things."

"Not soon enough to benefit you and me."

"Probably not."

"Then why waste your talents on the college, when the best years of your life are still before you?"

"I am not teaching for money, Gertrude." He hated putting into the bald phrase his consecration to his ideals for the young men of his State; he hated putting it into words at all; but something in his voice told her that the argument was finished.

There was a sound of carriage wheels on the drive. He arose and began to assist her with her wraps. "It is too bad for you to be dependent on even such nice escorts as the Dillinghams are," he

solaced, recovering himself. "We college folk are a sorry lot."

But when she was gone, the mood for composition which an hour before had seemed so near had escaped him, and he put away his books and manuscript, standing for a while, a little chilled in mind and body, before the grate and looking at the photograph on the mantel. While he did so the haunting likeness he had seen grew more distinct and by degrees another face overspread that of his young daughter, the face of the sister he had loved and lost.

With a sudden impulse he crossed the room to an old-fashioned mahogany secretary, opened its slanting lid, and unlocking with some difficulty a small inner drawer, returned with it to his desk. Several packages of letters tied with faded ribbon filled the small receptacle, but they struck upon him with the strangeness of something utterly forgotten. The pieces of ribbon had once held for him each its own association of time or place; now he could only remember, looking down upon them with tender gaze, that they had been Stella's, worn in her hair, or at her throat or waist. Simple and inexpensive he saw they were. Arnoldina would not have looked at them.

Overcoming something of reluctance, he took one of the packages from its place. It contained the letters he had found in her writing-table after her death, most of them written after she had come to Vaucluse by her stepmother and the friends she had left in the village. He knew there was nothing in any of them she would have withheld from him; in reading them he was merely taking back something from the vanished years which, if not looked at now, would perish utterly from earth. How affecting they were—these utterances of true and humble hearts, written to one equally true and good! His youth and hers in the remote country village rose before him; not now, as once, pinched and narrow, but as salutary, even gracious. He could but feel how changed his standards had become since then, how different his measure of the great and the small of life.

Suddenly, as he was thus borne back into the past, the old sorrow sprang upon him, and he bowed before it. The old bitter cry which he had been able to utter to no human consoler swept once more to his lips: "Oh, Stella, Stella, you died before I really knew you; your brother, who should have known and loved you best! And now it is too late, too late."

He sent out as of old his voiceless call to one afar off, in some land where her whiteness, her budding soul, had found their rightful place; but even as he did so, his thought of her seemed to be growing clearer. From that far, reverenced, but unimagined sphere she was coming back to the range of his apprehension, to comradeship in the life which they once had shared together.

He trembled with the hope of a fuller attainment, lifting his bowed head and taking another package of the letters from their place. Her letters! He had begged them of her friends in his desperate sense of ignorance, his longing to make good something of all that he had lost in those last two years of her life. What an innocent life it was that was spread before him; and how young,—oh, how young! And it was a happy life. He was astonished, after all his self-reproach, to realize how happy; to find himself smiling with her in some girlish drollery such as used to come so readily to her lips. He could detect, too, how the note of gladness, how her whole life, indeed, had grown richer in the larger existence of Vaucluse. At last he could be comforted that, however it had ended, it was he who had made it hers.

He had been reading eagerly, too eagerly, and under the pressure of emotion was constrained to rise and walk the floor, sinking at last into his armchair and gazing with unseeing eyes upon the ruddy coals in the grate. That lovely life, which he had thought could never in its completeness be his, was rebuilt before his vision from the materials which she herself had left. What he had believed to be loss, bitter, unspeakable even to himself, had in these few hours of the night become wealth.

His quickened thought moved on from plane to plane. He scanned the present conditions of his life, and saw with clarified vision how good they were. What it was given him to do for his students, at least what he was trying to do for them; the preciousness of their regard; the long friendship with his colleagues; the associations with the little community in which his lot was cast, limited in some directions as they might be; the fair demesne of Greek literature in which his feet were so much at home; his own literary gift, even if a slender one; his dear, dear child.

And Gertrude? Under the invigoration of his mood a situation which had long seemed unamenable to change re-

solved itself into new and simpler proportions. The worthier aspects of his home life, the finer traits of his wife's character, stood before him as proofs of what might yet be. His memory had kept no record of the fact that when in the first year of his youthful sorrow, sick for comfort and believing her all tenderness, he had married her, to find her impatient of his grief, nor of the many times since when she had appeared almost wilfully blind to his ideals and purposes. His judgment held only this, that she had never understood him. For this he had seldom blamed her; but to-night he blamed himself. Instead of shrinking away sensitively, keeping the vital part of his life to himself and making what he could of it alone, he should have set himself steadily to create a place for it in her understanding and sympathy. Was not a perfect married love worth the minor sacrifices as well as the supreme surrender from which he believed that neither of them would have shrunk?

He returned to his desk and began to rearrange the contents of the little drawer. Among them was a small sandalwood box which had been their mother's, and which Stella had prized with special fondness. He had never opened it since

her death, but as he lifted it now the frail clasp gave way, the lid fell back, and the contents slipped upon the desk. They were few: a ring, a thin gold locket containing the miniatures of their father and mother, a small tintype of himself taken when he first left home, and two or three notes addressed in a handwriting which he recognized as Wayland's. He replaced them with reverent touch, turning away even in thought from what he had never meant to see.

By and by he heard in the distance the roll of carriages returning from the Fieldings' reception. He replenished the fire generously, found a long cloak in the closet at the end of the hall, and waited the sound of wheels before his own door. "The rain has grown heavier," he said, drawing the cloak around his wife as she descended from the carriage. Something in his manner seemed to envelop her. He brought her into the study and seated her before the fire. She had expected to find the house silent; the glow and warmth of the room were grateful after the chill and darkness outside, her husband's presence after that vague sense of futility which the evening's gayety had left upon her.

"I suppose I ought to tell you about

the party," she said, a little wearily; "but if you don't mind, I will wait till breakfast. Everybody was there, of course, and it was all very fine, as we all knew it would be. I hope you've enjoyed your Latin poets more."

"They are Greek, dear," he said. "I have been making translations from some of them now and then. Some day we will take a day off and then I'll read them to you. But neither the party nor the poets to-night. See, it is almost two o'clock."

"I knew it must be late. But you look as fresh as a child that has just waked from sleep."

"Perhaps I have just waked."

They rose to go up-stairs. "I will go in front and make a light in our room while you turn off the gas in the hall."

He paused for a moment after she had gone out and turned to a page in the Greek Anthology for a single stanza. Shelley's translation was written in pencil beside it:

Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled;
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus giving
New splendor to the dead,

The Perfect Year

BY ELEANOR A. HALLOWELL

WHEN Dolly Leonard died, on the night of my *débutante* party, our little community was aghast. If I live to be a thousand, I shall never outgrow the paralyzing shock of that disaster. I think that the girls in our younger set never fully recovered from it.

It was six o'clock when we got the news. Things had been jolly and bustling all the afternoon. The house was filled with florists and caterers, and I had gone to my room to escape the final responsibilities of the occasion. There were seven of us girl chums dressing in my room, and we were lolling round in various stages of lace and ruffles when the door-bell rang. Partly out of consideration for the tired servants, and partly out of nervous curiosity incited by the day's influx of presents and bouquets, I slipped into my pink eider-down wrapper

and ran down to the door. The hall was startlingly sweet with roses. Indeed, the whole house was a perfect bower of leaf and blossom, and I suppose I did look elfish as I ran, for a gruff old workman peered up at me and smiled, and muttered something about "pinky-posy"—and I know it did not seem impertinent to me at the time.

At the door, in the chill blast of the night, stood our little old gray postman with some letters in his hand. "Oh!" I said, disappointed, "just letters."

The postman looked at me a trifle queerly—I thought it was my pink wrapper,—and he said, "Don't worry about 'just letters'; Dolly Leonard is dead!"

"Dead?" I gasped. "Dead?" and I remember how I reeled back against the open door and stared out with horror-stricken eyes across the common to Dolly Leonard's house, where every window was blazing with calamity.

"Dead?" I gasped again. "Dead? What happened?"

The postman eyed me with quizzical fatherliness. "Ask your mother," he answered, reluctantly, and I turned and groped my way leaden-footed up the stairs, muttering, "Oh, mother, mother, I don't *need* to ask you."

When I got back to my room at last through a tortuous maze of gaping workmen and sickening flowers, three startled girls jumped up to catch me as I staggered across the threshold. I did not faint, I did not cry out. I just sat huddled on the floor rocking myself to and fro, and mumbling, as through a mouthful of sawdust: "Dolly Leonard is dead. Dolly Leonard is dead. Dolly Leonard is dead."

I will not attempt to describe too fully the scene that followed. There were seven of us, you know, and we were only eighteen, and no young person of our acquaintance had ever died before. Indeed, only one aged death had ever disturbed our personal life history, and even that remote catastrophe had sent us scampering to each other's beds a whole winter long, for the individual fear of "seeing things at night."

"Dolly Leonard is dead." I can feel myself yet in that huddled news-heap on the floor. A girl at the mirror dropped her hand-glass with a shivering crash. Some one on the sofa screamed. The only one of us who was dressed began automatically to unfasten her lace collar and strip off her silken gown, and I can hear yet the soft lush sound of a

folded sash, and the strident click of the little French stays that pressed too close on a heaving breast.

Then some one threw wood on the fire with a great bang, and then more wood and more wood, and we crowded round the hearth and scorched our faces and hands, but we could not get warm enough.

Dolly Leonard was not even in our set. She was an older girl by several years. But she was the belle of the village. Dolly Leonard's gowns, Dolly Leonard's parties, Dolly Leonard's lovers, were the envy of all womankind. And Dolly Leonard's courtship and marriage were to us the fitting culmination of her wonderful career. She was our ideal of everything that a girl should be. She was good, she was beautiful, she was irresistibly fascinating. She was, in fact, everything that we girlishly longed to be in the revel of a ballroom or the white sanctity of a church.

And now she, the bright, the joyous, the warm, was colder than we were, and *would never be warm again.* Never again. . . . And there were garish flowers downstairs, and music and favors and ices—nasty shivery ices,—and pretty soon a brawling crowd of people would come

and *dance* because I was eighteen—and still alive.

Into our hideous brooding broke a husky little voice that had not yet spoken:

"Dolly Leonard told my big sister a month ago that she wasn't a bit frightened, — that she had had one perfect year, and a perfect year was well worth dying for—if one had to. Of course she hoped she wouldn't die, but if she did, it was a wonderful thing to die happy. Dolly was queer about it; I heard my big sister telling mother. Dolly said, 'Life couldn't always be at high tide—there was only one high tide in any one's life, and she thought it was beautiful to go in the full flush before the tide turned.'"

The speaker ended with a harsh sob.

Then suddenly into our awed silence broke my mother in full evening dress. She was a very handsome mother.

As she looked down on our huddled group there were tears in her eyes, but there was no shock. I noticed distinctly that there was no shock. "Why, girls," she exclaimed, with a certain terse brightness, "aren't you dressed yet? It's eight o'clock and people are beginning to arrive." She seemed so frivolous to me,

I remember that I felt a little ashamed of her.

"We don't want any party," I answered, glumly. "The girls are going home."

"Nonsense!" said my mother, catching me by the hand and pulling me almost roughly to my feet. "Go quickly and call one of the maids to come and help you dress. Angeline, I'll do your hair. Bertha, where are your shoes? Gertrude, that's a beautiful gown—just your color. Hurry into it. There goes the bell. Hark! the orchestra is beginning."

And so, with a word here, a touch there, a searching look everywhere, mother marshalled us into line. I had never heard her voice raised before.

The color came back to our cheeks, the light to our eyes. We bubbled over with spirits—nervous spirits, to be sure, but none the less vivacious ones.

When the last hook was fastened, the last glove buttoned, the last curl fluffed into place, mother stood for an instant tapping her foot on the floor. She looked like a little general.

"Girls," she said, "there are five hundred people coming to-night from all over the State, and fully two-thirds of them never heard of Dolly Leonard. We

must never spoil other people's pleasures by flaunting our own personal griefs. I expect my daughter to conduct herself this evening with perfect cheerfulness and grace. She owes it to her guests; and"—mother's chin went high up in the air—"I refuse to receive in my house again any one of you girls who mars my daughter's *débutante* party by tears or hysterics. You may go now."

We went, silently berating the brutal harshness of grown people. We went, airily, flutteringly, luminously, like a bunch of butterflies. At the head of the stairs the music caught us up in a maelstrom of excitement and whirled us down into the throng of pleasure. And when we reached the drawing-room and found mother we felt as though we were walking on air. We thought it was self-control. We were not old enough to know it was mostly "youth."

My *débutante* party was the gayest party ever given in our town. We seven girls were like sprites gone mad. We were like fairy torches that kindled the whole throng. We flitted among the palms like will-o'-the-wisps. We danced the toes out of our satin slippers. We led our old boy-friends a wild chase of young love and laughter, and because

our hearts were like frozen lead within us we sought, as it were, "to warm both hands at the fires of life." We trifled with older men. We flirted, as it were, with our fathers.

My *débutante* party turned out a revel. I have often wondered if my mother was frightened. I don't know what went on in the other girls' brains, but mine were seared with the old-world recklessness—"Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." *We* die!

I had a lover—a boy lover. His name was Gordon. He was twenty-one years old, and he had courted me with boyish seriousness for three years. Mother had always pooh-poohed his love-story and said: "Wait, wait. Why, my daughter isn't even *out* yet. Wait till she's out."

And Gordon had narrowed his near-sighted eyes ominously and shut his lips tight. "Very well," he had answered, "I will wait till she is out—but no longer."

He was rich, he was handsome, he was well-born, he was strong, but more than all that he held my fancy with a certain thrilling tenacity that frightened me while it lured me. And I had always looked forward to my *débutante* party on my eighteenth birthday with the tingling realization, half joy, half fear,

that on that day I should have to settle once and forever with—*man.*

I had often wondered how Gordon would propose. He was a proud, high-strung boy. If he was humble, and pleaded and pleaded with the hurt look in his eyes that I knew so well, I thought I would accept him; and if we could get to mother in the crowd, perhaps we could announce the engagement at supper-time. It seemed to me that it would be a very wonderful thing to be engaged on one's eighteenth birthday. So many girls were not engaged till nineteen or even twenty. But if he was masterful and high-stepping, as he knew so well how to be, I had decided to refuse him scornfully with a toss of my head and a laugh. I could break his heart with the sort of laugh I had practised before my mirror.

It is a terrible thing to have a long-anticipated event finally overtake you. It is the most terrible thing of all to have to settle once and forever with *man.*

Gordon came for me at eleven o'clock. I was flirting airily at the time with our village Beau Brummel, who was old enough to be my grandfather.

Gordon slipped my little hand through his arm and carried me off to a lonely place in the conservatory. For a second

it seemed a beautiful relief to be out of the noise and the glare—and alone with Gordon. But instantly my realization of the potential moment rushed over me like a flood, and I began to tremble violently. All the nervous strain of the evening reacted suddenly on me.

"What's the matter with you tonight?" asked Gordon, a little sternly. "What makes you so wild?" he persisted, with a grim little attempt at a laugh.

At his words, my heart seemed to turn over within me and settle heavily. It was before the days when we discussed life's tragedies with our best men friends. Indeed, it was so long before that I sickened and grew faint at the very thought of the sorrowful knowledge which I kept secret from him.

Again he repeated, "What's the matter with you?" but I could find no answer. I just sat shivering, with my lace scarf drawn close across my bare shoulders.

Gordon took hold of a white ruffle on my gown and began to fidget with it. I could see the fine thoughts go flitting through his eyes, but when he spoke again it was quite commonplacely.

"Will you do me a favor?" he asked. "Will you do me the favor of marry-

ing me?" And he laughed. Good God! he *laughed!*

"A favor" to marry him! And he asked it as he might have asked for a posie or a dance. So flippantly—with a laugh. *"A favor"!* And Dolly Leonard lay dead of *her* favor!

I jumped to my feet—I was half mad with fear and sex and sorrow and excitement. Something in my brain snapped. And I struck Gordon—struck him across the face with my open hand. And he turned as white as the dead Dolly Leonard, and went away—oh, very far away.

Then I ran back alone to the hall and stumbled into my father's arms.

"Are you having a good time?" asked my father, pointing playfully at my blazing cheeks.

I went to my answer like an arrow to its mark. "I am having the most wonderful time in the world," I cried; *"I have settled with man."*

My father put back his head and shouted. He thought it was a fine joke. He laughed about it long after my party was over. He thought my head was turned. He laughed about it long after other people had stopped wondering why Gordon went away.

I never told any one why Gordon

went away. I might under certain circumstances have told a girl, but it was not the sort of thing one could have told one's mother. This is the first time I have ever told the story of Dolly Leonard's death and my *débutante* party.

Dolly Leonard left a little son behind her—a joyous, rollicking little son. His name is Paul Yardley. We girls were pleased with the initials—P. Y. They stand to us for "Perfect Year."

Dolly Leonard's husband has married again, and his wife has borne him safely three daughters and a son. Each one of my six girl chums is the mother of a family. Now and again in my experience some woman has shirked a duty. But I have never yet met a woman who dared to shirk a happiness. Duties repeat themselves. There is no duplicate of happiness.

I am fifty-eight years old. I have never married. I do not say whether I am glad or sorry. I only know that I have never had a Perfect Year. I only know that I have never been warm since the night that Dolly Leonard died.

Editha

BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

THE air was thick with the war feeling, like the electricity of a storm which has not yet burst. Editha sat looking out into the hot spring afternoon, with her lips parted, and panting with the intensity of the question whether she could let him go. She had decided that she could not let him stay, when she saw him at the end of the still leafless avenue, making slowly up toward the house, with his head down, and his figure relaxed. She ran impatiently out on the veranda, to the edge of the steps, and imperatively demanded greater haste of him with her will before she called aloud to him, "George!"

He had quickened his pace in mystical response to her mystical urgence, before he could have heard her; now he looked up and answered, "Well?"

"Oh, how united we are!" she exulted,

and then she swooped down the steps to him. "What is it?" she cried.

"It's war," he said, and he pulled her up to him, and kissed her.

She kissed him back intensely, but irrelevantly, as to their passion, and uttered from deep in her throat, "How glorious!"

"It's war," he repeated, without consenting to her sense of it; and she did not know just what to think at first. She never knew what to think of him; that made his mystery, his charm. All through their courtship, which was contemporaneous with the growth of the war feeling, she had been puzzled by his want of seriousness about it. He seemed to despise it even more than he abhorred it. She could have understood his abhorring any sort of bloodshed; that would have been a survival of his old life when he thought he would be a minister, and before he changed and took up the law. But making light of a cause so high and noble seemed to show a want of earnestness at the core of his being. Not but that she felt herself able to cope with a congenital defect of that sort, and make his love for her save him from himself. Now perhaps the miracle

was already wrought in him. In the presence of the tremendous fact that he announced, all triviality seemed to have gone out of him; she began to feel that. He sank down on the top step, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, while she poured out upon him her question of the origin and authenticity of his news.

All the while, in her duplex emotioning, she was aware that now at the very beginning she must put a guard upon herself against urging him, by any word or act, to take the part that her whole soul willed him to take, for the completion of her ideal of him. He was very nearly perfect as he was, and he must be allowed to perfect himself. But he was peculiar, and he might very well be reasoned out of his peculiarity. Before her reasoning went her emotioning: her nature pulling upon his nature, her womanhood upon his manhood, without her knowing the means she was using to the end she was willing. She had always supposed that the man who won her would have done something to win her; she did not know what, but something. George Gearson had simply asked her for her love, on the way home from a concert, and she gave her

love to him, without. as it were, thinking. But now, it flashed upon her, if he could do something worthy to *have* won her—be a hero, *her* hero—it would be even better than if he had done it before asking her; it would be grander. Besides, she had believed in the war from the beginning.

"But don't you see, dearest," she said, "that it wouldn't have come to this, if it hadn't been in the order of Providence? And I call any war glorious that is for the liberation of people who have been struggling for years against the cruelest oppression. Don't you think so too?"

"I suppose so," he returned, languidly. "But war! Is it glorious to break the peace of the world?"

"That ignoble peace! It was no peace at all, with that crime and shame at our very gates." She was conscious of parroting the current phrases of the newspapers, but it was no time to pick and choose her words. She must sacrifice anything to the high ideal she had for him, and after a good deal of rapid argument she ended with the climax: "But now it doesn't matter about the how or why. Since the war has come, all that is gone. There are no two sides,

any more. There is nothing now but our country."

He sat with his eyes closed and his head leant back against the veranda, and he said with a vague smile, as if musing aloud, "Our country—right or wrong."

"Yes, right or wrong!" she returned fervidly. "I'll go and get you some lemonade." She rose rustling, and whisked away; when she came back with two tall glasses of clouded liquid, on a tray, and the ice clucking in them, he still sat as she had left him, and she said as if there had been no interruption: "But there is no question of wrong in this case. I call it a sacred war. A war for liberty, and humanity, if ever there was one. And I know you will see it just as I do, yet."

He took half the lemonade at a gulp, and he answered as he set the glass down: "I know you always have the highest ideal. When I differ from you, I ought to doubt myself."

A generous sob rose in Editha's throat for the humility of a man, so very nearly perfect, who was willing to put himself below her.

Besides, she felt that he was never so near slipping through her fingers as when he took that meek way.

"You shall not say that! Only, for once I happen to be right." She seized his hand in her two hands, and poured her soul from her eyes into his. "Don't you think so?" she entreated him.

He released his hand and drank the rest of his lemonade, and she added, "Have mine, too," but he shook his head in answering, "I've no business to think so, unless I act so, too."

Her heart stopped a beat before it pulsed on with leaps that she felt in her neck. She had noticed that strange thing in men; they seemed to feel bound to do what they believed, and not think a thing was finished when they said it, as girls did. She knew what was in his mind, but she pretended not, and she said, "Oh, I am not sure."

He went on as if to himself without apparently heeding her. "There's only one way of proving one's faith in a thing like this."

She could not say that she understood, but she did understand.

He went on again. "If I believed—if I felt as you do about this war— Do you wish me to feel as you do?"

Now she was really not sure; so she said, "George, I don't know what you mean."

He seemed to muse away from her as before. "There is a sort of fascination in it. I suppose that at the bottom of his heart every man would like at times to have his courage tested; to see how he would act."

"How can you talk in that ghastly way!"

"It *is* rather morbid. Still, that's what it comes to, unless you're swept away by ambition, or driven by conviction. I haven't the conviction or the ambition, and the other thing is what it comes to with me. I ought to have been a preacher, after all; then I couldn't have asked it of myself, as I must, now I'm a lawyer. And you believe it's a holy war, Editha?" he suddenly addressed her. "Or, I know you do! But you wish me to believe so, too?"

She hardly knew whether he was mocking or not, in the ironical way he always had with her plainer mind. But the only thing was to be outspoken with him.

"George, I wish you to believe whatever you think is true, at any and every cost. If I've tried to talk you into anything, I take it all back."

"Oh, I know that, Editha. I know how sincere you are, and how— I wish

I had your undoubting spirit! I'll think it over; I'd like to believe as you do. But I don't, now; I don't, indeed. It isn't this war alone; though this seems peculiarly wanton and needless; but it's every war—so stupid; it makes me sick. Why shouldn't this thing have been settled reasonably?"

"Because," she said, very throatily again, "God meant it to be war."

"You think it was God? Yes, I suppose that is what people will say."

"Do you suppose it would have been war if God hadn't meant it?"

"I don't know. Sometimes it seems as if God had put this world into men's keeping to work it as they pleased."

"Now, George, that is blasphemy."

"Well, I won't blaspheme. I'll try to believe in your pocket Providence," he said, and then he rose to go.

"Why don't you stay to dinner?" Dinner at Balcom's Works was at one o'clock.

"I'll come back to supper, if you'll let me. Perhaps I shall bring you a convert."

"Well, you may come back, on that condition."

"All right. If I don't come, you'll understand."

He went away without kissing her, and she felt it a suspension of their engagement. It all interested her intensely; she was undergoing a tremendous experience, and she was being equal to it. While she stood looking after him, her mother came out through one of the long windows, on to the veranda, with a catlike softness and vagueness.

"Why didn't he stay to dinner?"

"Because—because—war has been declared," Editha pronounced, without turning.

Her mother said, "Oh, my!" and then said nothing more until she had sat down in one of the large Shaker chairs, and rocked herself for some time. Then she closed whatever tacit passage of thought there had been in her mind with the spoken words, "Well, I hope *he* won't go."

"And *I* hope he *will*," the girl said, and confronted her mother with a stormy exaltation that would have frightened any creature less unimpressionable than a cat.

Her mother rocked herself again for an interval of cogitation. What she arrived at in speech was, "Well, I guess you've done a wicked thing, Editha Balcom."

The girl said, as she passed indoors through the same window her mother had come out by, "I haven't done anything—yet."

In her room, she put together all her letters and gifts from Gearson, down to the withered petals of the first flower he had offered, with that timidity of his veiled in that irony of his. In the heart of the packet she enshrined her engagement ring which she had restored to the pretty box he had brought it her in. Then she sat down, if not calmly yet strongly, and wrote:

"George: I understood—when you left me. But I think we had better emphasize your meaning that if we cannot be one in everything we had better be one in nothing. So I am sending these things for your keeping till you have made up your mind.

"I shall always love you, and therefore I shall never marry any one else. But the man I marry must love his country first of all, and be able to say to me,

> 'I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Loved I not honor more.'

"There is no honor above America

with me. In this great hour there is no other honor.

"Your heart will make my words clear to you. I had never expected to say so much, but it has come upon me that I must say the utmost. EDITHA."

She thought she had worded her letter well, worded it in a way that could not be bettered; all had been implied and nothing expressed.

She had it ready to send with the packet she had tied with red, white, and blue ribbon, when it occurred to her that she was not just to him, that she was not giving him a fair chance. He had said he would go and think it over, and she was not waiting. She was pushing, threatening, compelling. That was not a woman's part. She must leave him free, free, free. She could not accept for her country or herself a forced sacrifice.

In writing her letter she had satisfied the impulse from which it sprang; she could well afford to wait till he had thought it over. She put the packet and the letter by, and rested serene in the consciousness of having done what was laid upon her by her love itself to do, and yet used patience, mercy, justice.

She had her reward. Gearson did not come to tea, but she had given him till morning, when, late at night there came up from the village the sound of a fife and drum with a tumult of voices, in shouting, singing, and laughing. The noise drew nearer and nearer; it reached the street end of the avenue; there it silenced itself, and one voice, the voice she knew best, rose over the silence. It fell; the air was filled with cheers; the fife and drum struck up, with the shouting, singing, and laughing again, but now retreating; and a single figure came hurrying up the avenue.

She ran down to meet her lover and clung to him. He was very gay, and he put his arm round her with a boisterous laugh. "Well, you must call me Captain, now; or Cap, if you prefer; that's what the boys call me. Yes, we've had a meeting at the town hall, and everybody has volunteered; and they selected me for captain, and I'm going to the war, the big war, the glorious war, the holy war ordained by the pocket Providence that blesses butchery. Come along; let's tell the whole family about it. Call them from their downy beds, father, mother, Aunt Hitty, and all the folks!"

But when they mounted the veranda

steps he did not wait for a larger audience; he poured the story out upon Editha alone.

"There was a lot of speaking, and then some of the fools set up a shout for me. It was all going one way, and I thought it would be a good joke to sprinkle a little cold water on them. But you can't do that with a crowd that adores you. The first thing I knew I was sprinkling hell-fire on them. 'Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war.' That was the style. Now that it had come to the fight, there were no two parties; there was one country, and the thing was to fight the fight to a finish as quick as possible. I suggested volunteering then and there, and I wrote my name first of all on the roster. Then they elected me—that's all. I wish I had some ice-water!"

She left him walking up and down the veranda, while she ran for the ice-pitcher and a goblet, and when she came back he was still walking up and down, shouting the story he had told her to her father and mother, who had come out more sketchily dressed than they commonly were by day. He drank goblet after goblet of the ice-water without noticing who was giving it, and kept on talking, and

laughing through his talk wildly. "It's astonishing," he said, "how well the worse reason looks when you try to make it appear the better. Why, I believe I was the first convert to the war in that crowd to-night! I never thought I should like to kill a man; but now, I shouldn't care; and the smokeless powder lets you see the man drop that you kill. It's all for the country! What a thing it is to have a country that *can't* be wrong, but if it is, is right anyway!"

Editha had a great, vital thought, an inspiration. She set down the ice-pitcher on the veranda floor, and ran up-stairs and got the letter she had written him. When at last he noisily bade her father and mother, "Well, good night. I forgot I woke you up; I sha'n't want any sleep myself," she followed him down the avenue to the gate. There, after the whirling words that seemed to fly away from her thoughts and refuse to serve them, she made a last effort to solemnize the moment that seemed so crazy, and pressed the letter she had written upon him.

"What's this?" he said. "Want me to mail it?"

"No, no. It's for you. I wrote it after you went this morning. Keep it—

keep it—and read it sometime—" She thought, and then her inspiration came: "Read it if ever you doubt what you've done, or fear that I regret your having done it. Read it after you've started."

They strained each other in embraces that seemed as ineffective as their words, and he kissed her face with quick, hot breaths that were so unlike him, that made her feel as if she had lost her old lover and found a stranger in his place. The stranger said, "What a gorgeous flower you are, with your red hair, and your blue eyes that look black now, and your face with the color painted out by the white moonshine! Let me hold you under my chin, to see whether I love blood, you tiger-lily!" Then he laughed Gearson's laugh, and released her, scared and giddy. Within her wilfulness she had been frightened by a sense of subtler force in him, and mystically mastered as she had never been before.

She ran all the way back to the house, and mounted the steps panting. Her mother and father were talking of the great affair. Her mother said: "Wa'n't Mr. Gearson in rather of an excited state of mind? Didn't you think he acted curious?"

"Well, not for a man who'd just been elected captain and had to set 'em up for the whole of Company A," her father chuckled back.

"What in the world do you mean, Mr. Balcom? Oh! There's Editha!" She offered to follow the girl indoors.

"Don't come, mother!" Editha called, vanishing.

Mrs. Balcom remained to reproach her husband. "I don't see much of anything to laugh at."

"Well, it's catching. Caught it from Gearson. I guess it won't be much of a war, and I guess Gearson don't think so, either. The other fellows will back down as soon as they see we mean it. I wouldn't lose any sleep over it. I'm going back to bed, myself."

Gearson came again next afternoon, looking pale, and rather sick, but quite himself, even to his languid irony. "I guess I'd better tell you, Editha, that I consecrated myself to your god of battles last night by pouring too many libations to him down my own throat. But I'm all right, now. One has to carry off the excitement, somehow."

"Promise me," she commanded, "that you'll never touch it again!"

"What! Not let the cannikin clink? Not let the soldier drink? Well, I promise."

"You don't belong to yourself now; you don't even belong to *me*. You belong to your country, and you have a sacred charge to keep yourself strong and well for your country's sake. I have been thinking, thinking all night and all day long."

"You look as if you had been crying a little, too," he said with his queer smile.

"That's all past. I've been thinking, and worshipping *you*. Don't you suppose I know all that you've been through, to come to this? I've followed you every step from your old theories and opinions."

"Well, you've had a long row to hoe."

"And I know you've done this from the highest motives—"

"Oh, there won't be much pettifogging to do till this cruel war is—"

"And you haven't simply done it for my sake. I couldn't respect you if you had."

"Well, then we'll say I haven't. A man that hasn't got his own respect intact wants the respect of all the other people he can corner. But we won't go into that. I'm in for the thing now, and we've got to face our future. My idea

is that this isn't going to be a very protracted struggle; we shall just scare the enemy to death before it comes to a fight at all. But we must provide for contingencies, Editha. If anything happens to me—"

"Oh, George!" She clung to him sobbing.

"I don't want you to feel foolishly bound to my memory. I should hate that, wherever I happened to be."

"I am yours, for time and eternity—time and eternity." She liked the words; they satisfied her famine for phrases.

"Well, say eternity; that's all right; but time's another thing; and I'm talking about time. But there is something! My mother! If anything happens—"

She winced, and he laughed. "You're not the bold soldier-girl of yesterday!" Then he sobered. "If anything happens, I want you to help my mother out. She won't like my doing this thing. She brought me up to think war a fool thing as well as a bad thing. My father was in the civil war; all through it; lost his arm in it." She thrilled with the sense of the arm round her; what if that should be lost? He laughed as if divining her: "Oh, it doesn't run in the family, as far as I know!" Then he added, gravely,

"He came home with misgivings about war, and they grew on him. I guess he and mother agreed between them that I was to be brought up in his final mind about it; but that was before my time. I only knew him from my mother's report of him and his opinions; I don't know whether they were hers first; but they were hers last. This will be a blow to her. I shall have to write and tell her—"

He stopped, and she asked, "Would you like me to write too, George?"

"I don't believe that would do. No, I'll do the writing. She'll understand a little if I say that I thought the way to minimize it was to make war on the largest possible scale at once—that I felt I must have been helping on the war somehow if I hadn't helped keep it from coming, and I knew I hadn't; when it came, I had no right to stay out of it."

Whether his sophistries satisfied him or not, they satisfied her. She clung to his breast, and whispered, with closed eyes and quivering lips, "Yes, yes, yes!"

"But if anything should happen, you might go to her, and see what you could do for her. You know? It's rather far off; she can't leave her chair—"

"Oh, I'll go, if it's the ends of the

earth! But nothing will happen! Nothing *can!* I—"

She felt herself lifted with his rising, and Gearson was saying, with his arm still round her, to her father: "Well, we're off at once, Mr. Balcom. We're to be formally accepted at the capital, and then bunched up with the rest somehow, and sent into camp somewhere, and got to the front as soon as possible. We all want to be in the van, of course; we're the first company to report to the Governor. I came to tell Editha, but I hadn't got round to it."

She saw him again for a moment at the capital, in the station, just before the train started southward with his regiment. He looked well, in his uniform, and very soldierly, but somehow girlish, too, with his clean-shaven face and slim figure. The manly eyes and the strong voice satisfied her, and his preoccupation with some unexpected details of duty flattered her. Other girls were weeping, but she felt a sort of noble distinction in the abstraction with which they parted. Only at the last moment he said, "Don't forget my mother. It mayn't be such a walk-over as I supposed," and he laughed at the notion.

He waved his hand to her, as the train moved off—she knew it among a score of hands that were waved to other girls from the platform of the car, for it held a letter which she knew was hers. Then he went inside the car to read it, doubtless, and she did not see him again. But she felt safe for him through the strength of what she called her love. What she called her God, always speaking the name in a deep voice and with the implication of a mutual understanding, would watch over him and keep him and bring him back to her. If with an empty sleeve, then he should have three arms instead of two, for both of hers should be his for life. She did not see, though, why she should always be thinking of the arm his father had lost.

There were not many letters from him, but they were such as she could have wished, and she put her whole strength into making hers such as she imagined he could have wished, glorifying and supporting him. She wrote to his mother, but the brief answer she got was merely to the effect that Mrs. Gearson was not well enough to write herself, and thanking her for her letter by the hand of some one who called herself "Yrs truly, Mrs. W. J. Andrews."

Editha determined not to be hurt, but to write again quite as if the answer had been all she expected. But before it seemed as if she could have written, there came news of the first skirmish, and in the list of the killed which was telegraphed as a trifling loss on our side, was Gearson's name. There was a frantic time of trying to make out that it might be, must be, some other Gearson; but the name, and the company and the regiment, and the State were too definitely given.

Then there was a lapse into depths out of which it seemed as if she never could rise again; then a lift into clouds far above all grief, black clouds, that blotted out the sun, but where she soared with him, with George, George! She had the fever that she expected of herself, but she did not die in it; she was not even delirious, and it did not last long. When she was well enough to leave her bed, her one thought was of George's mother, of his strangely worded wish that she should go to her and see what she could do for her. In the exaltation of the duty laid upon her—it buoyed her up instead of burdening her—she rapidly recovered.

Her father went with her on the long

railroad journey from northern New York to western Iowa; he had business out at Davenport, and he said he could just as well go then as any other time; and he went with her to the little country town where George's mother lived in a little house on the edge of illimitable corn-fields, under trees pushed to a top of the rolling prairie. George's father had settled there after the civil war, as so many other old soldiers had done; but they were Eastern people, and Editha fancied touches of the East in the June rose overhanging the front door, and the garden with early summer flowers stretching from the gate of the paling fence.

It was very low inside the house, and so dim, with the closed blinds, that they could scarcely see one another: Editha tall and black in her crapes which filled the air with the smell of their dyes; her father standing decorously apart with his hat on his forearm, as at funerals; a woman rested in a deep armchair, and the woman who had let the strangers in stood behind the chair.

The seated woman turned her head round and up, and asked the woman behind her chair, "*Who* did you say?"

Editha, if she had done what she expected of herself, would have gone down

on her knees at the feet of the seated figure and said, "I am George's Editha," for answer.

But instead of her own voice she heard that other woman's voice, saying, "Well, I don't know as I *did* get the name just right. I guess I'll have to make a little more light in here," and she went and pushed two of the shutters ajar.

Then Editha's father said in his public will-now-address-a-few-remarks tone, "My name is Balcom, ma'am; Junius H. Balcom, of Balcom's Works, New York; my daughter—"

"Oh!" The seated woman broke in, with a powerful voice, the voice that always surprised Editha from Gearson's slender frame. "Let me see you! Stand round where the light can strike on your face," and Editha dumbly obeyed. "So, you're Editha Balcom," she sighed.

"Yes," Editha said, more like a culprit than a comforter.

"What did you come for?"

Editha's face quivered, and her knees shook. "I came — because — because George—" She could go no farther.

"Yes," the mother said, "he told me he had asked you to come if he got killed. You didn't expect that, I suppose, when you sent him."

"I would rather have died myself than done it!" Editha said with more truth in her deep voice than she ordinarily found in it. "I tried to leave him free—"

"Yes, that letter of yours, that came back with his other things, left him free."

Editha saw now where George's irony came from.

"It was not to be read before—unless —until— I told him so," she faltered.

"Of course, he wouldn't read a letter of yours, under the circumstances, till he thought you wanted him to. Been sick?" the woman abruptly demanded.

"Very sick," Editha said, with self-pity.

"Daughter's life," her father interposed, "was almost despaired of, at one time."

Mrs. Gearson gave him no heed. "I suppose you would have been glad to die, such a brave person as you! I don't believe *he* was glad to die. He was always a timid boy, that way; he was afraid of a good many things; but if he was afraid he did what he made up his mind to. I suppose he made up his mind to go, but I knew what it cost him, by what it cost me when I heard of it. I had been through *one* war before. When you sent him you didn't expect he would get killed."

The voice seemed to compassionate Editha, and it was time. "No," she huskily murmured.

"No, girls don't; women don't, when they give their men up to their country. They think they'll come marching back, somehow, just as gay as they went, or if it's an empty sleeve, or even an empty pantaloon, it's all the more glory, and they're so much the prouder of them, poor things."

The tears began to run down Editha's face; she had not wept till then; but it was now such a relief to be understood that the tears came.

"No, you didn't expect him to get killed," Mrs. Gearson repeated in a voice which was startlingly like George's again. "You just expected him to kill some one else, some of those foreigners, that weren't there because they had any say about it, but because they had to be there, poor wretches—conscripts, or whatever they call 'em. You thought it would be all right for my George, *your* George, to kill the sons of those miserable mothers and the husbands of those girls that you would never see the faces of." The woman lifted her powerful voice in a psalmlike note. "I thank my God he didn't live to do it! I thank my God

they killed him first, and that he ain't livin' with their blood on his hands!" She dropped her eyes which she had raised with her voice, and glared at Editha. "What you got that black on for?" She lifted herself by her powerful arms so high that her helpless body seemed to hang limp its full length. "Take it off, take it off, before I tear it from your back!"

The lady who was passing the summer near Balcom's Works was sketching Editha's beauty, which lent itself wonderfully to the effects of a colorist. It had come to that confidence which is rather apt to grow between artist and sitter, and Editha had told her everything.

"To think of your having such a tragedy in your life!" the lady said. She added: "I suppose there are people who feel that way about war. But when you consider how much this war has done for the country! I can't understand such people, for my part. And when you had come all the way out there to console her—got up out of a sick bed! Well!"

"I think," Editha said, magnanimously, "she wasn't quite in her right mind; and so did papa."

"Yes," the lady said, looking at Editha's lips in nature and then at her lips in art, and giving an empirical touch to them in the picture. "But how dreadful of her! How perfectly—excuse me—how *vulgar!*"

A light broke upon Editha in the darkness which she felt had been without a gleam of brightness for weeks and months. The mystery that had bewildered her was solved by the word; and from that moment she rose from grovelling in shame and self-pity, and began to live again in the ideal.

The Stout Miss Hopkins's Bicycle

BY OCTAVE THANET

THERE was a skeleton in Mrs. Margaret Ellis's closet; the same skeleton abode also in the closet of Miss Lorania Hopkins.

The skeleton—which really does not seem a proper word—was the dread of growing stout. They were more afraid of flesh than of sin. Yet they were both good women. Mrs. Ellis regularly attended church, and could always be depended on to show hospitality to convention delegates, whether clerical or lay; she was a liberal subscriber to every good work; she was almost the only woman in the church aid society that never lost her temper at the soul-vexing time of the church fair; and she had a larger clientèle of regular pensioners than any one in town, unless it were her friend Miss Hopkins, who was "so good to the poor" that never a tramp slighted her kitchen. Miss Hopkins was as amia-

ble as Mrs. Ellis, and always put her name under that of Mrs. Ellis, with exactly the same amount, on the subscription papers. She could have given more, for she had the larger income; but she had no desire to outshine her friend, whom she admired as the most charming of women.

Mrs. Ellis, indeed, was agreeable as well as good, and a pretty woman to the bargain, if she did not choose to be weighed before people. Miss Hopkins often told her that she was not really stout; she merely had a plump, trig little figure. Miss Hopkins, alas! was really stout. The two waged a warfare against the flesh equal to the apostle's in vigor, although so much less deserving of praise.

Mrs. Ellis drove her cook to distraction with divers dieting systems, from Banting's and Dr. Salisbury's to the latest exhortations of some unknown newspaper prophet. She bought elaborate gymnastic appliances, and swung dumb-bells and rode imaginary horses and propelled imaginary boats. She ran races with a professional trainer, and she studied the principles of Delsarte, and solemnly whirled on one foot and swayed her body and rolled her head and

hopped and kicked and genuflected in company with eleven other stout and earnest matrons and one slim and giggling girl who almost choked at every lesson. In all these exercises Miss Hopkins faithfully kept her company, which was the easier as Miss Hopkins lived in the next house, a conscientious Colonial mansion with all the modern conveniences hidden beneath the old-fashioned pomp.

And yet, despite these struggles and self-denials, it must be told that Margaret Ellis and Lorania Hopkins were little thinner for their warfare. Still, as Shuey Cardigan, the trainer, told Mrs. Ellis, there was no knowing what they might have weighed had they not struggled.

"It ain't only the fat that's *on* ye, moind ye," says Shuey, with a confidential sympathy of mien; "it's what ye'd naturally be getting in addition. And first ye've got to peel off that, and then ye come down to the other."

Shuey was so much the most successful of Mrs. Ellis's reducers that his words were weighty. And when at last Shuey said, "I got what you need," Mrs. Ellis listened. "You need a bike, no less," says Shuey.

"But I never could ride one!" said Margaret, opening her pretty brown eyes and wrinkling her Grecian forehead.

"You'd ride in six lessons."

"But how would I *look*, Cardigan?"

"You'd look noble, ma'am!"

"What do you consider the best wheel, Cardigan?"

The advertising rules of magazines prevent my giving Cardigan's answer; it is enough that the wheel glittered at Mrs. Ellis's door the very next day, and that a large pasteboard box was delivered by the expressman the very next week. He went on to Miss Hopkins's, and delivered the twin of the box, with a similar yellow printed card bearing the impress of the same great firm on the inside of the box cover.

For Margaret had hied her to Lorania Hopkins the instant Shuey was gone. She presented herself breathless, a little to the embarrassment of Lorania, who was sitting with her niece before a large box of cracker-jack.

"It's a new kind of candy; I was just *tasting* it, Maggie," faltered she, while the niece, a girl of nineteen, with the inhuman spirits of her age, laughed aloud.

"You needn't mind me," said Mrs.

Ellis, cheerfully; "I'm eating potatoes now!"

"Oh, Maggie!" Miss Hopkins breathed the words between envy and disapproval.

Mrs. Ellis tossed her brown head airily, not a whit abashed. "And I had beer for luncheon, and I'm going to have champagne for dinner."

"Maggie, how do you dare? Did they —did they taste good?"

"They tasted *heavenly,* Lorania. Pass me the candy. I am going to try something new—the thinningest thing there is. I read in the paper of one woman who lost forty pounds in three months, and is losing still!"

"If it is obesity pills, I—"

"It isn't; it's a bicycle. Lorania, you and I must ride! Sibyl Hopkins, you heartless child, what are you laughing at?"

Lorania rose; in the glass over the mantel her figure returned her gaze. There was no mistake (except that, as is often the case with stout people, *that* glass always increased her size), she was a stout lady. She was taller than the average of women, and well proportioned, and still light on her feet; but she could not blink away the records; she was heavy on the scales. Did she stand looking at

herself squarely, her form was shapely enough, although larger than she could wish; but the full force of the revelation fell when she allowed herself a profile view, she having what is called "a round waist," and being almost as large one way as another. Yet Lorania was only thirty-three years old, and was of no mind to retire from society, and have a special phaeton built for her use, and hear from her mother's friends how much her mother weighed before her death.

"How should *I* look on a wheel?" she asked, even as Mrs. Ellis had asked before; and Mrs. Ellis stoutly answered, "You'd look *noble!*"

"Shucy will teach us," she went on, "and we can have a track made in your pasture, where nobody can see us learning. Lorania, there's nothing like it. Let me bring you the bicycle edition of *Harper's Bazar.*"

Miss Hopkins capitulated at once, and sat down to order her costume, while Sibyl, the niece, revelled silently in visions of a new bicycle which should presently revert to her. "For it's ridiculous, auntie's thinking of riding!" Miss Sibyl considered. "She would be a figure of fun on a wheel; besides, she can never learn in this world!"

Yet Sibyl was attached to her aunt, and enjoyed visiting Hopkins Manor, as Lorania had named her new house, into which she moved on the same day that she joined the Colonial Dames, by right of her ancestor the great and good divine commemorated by Mrs. Stowe. Lorania's friends were all fond of her, she was so good-natured and tolerant, with a touch of dry humor in her vision of things, and not the least a Puritan in her frank enjoyment of ease and luxury. Nevertheless, Lorania had a good, able-bodied, New England conscience, capable of staying awake nights without flinching; and perhaps from her stanch old Puritan forefathers she inherited her simple integrity so that she neither lied nor cheated—even in the small, whitewashed manner of her sex—and valued loyalty above most of the virtues. She had an innocent pride in her godly and martial ancestry, which was quite on the surface, and led people who did not know her to consider her haughty.

For fifteen years she had been an orphan, the mistress of a very large estate. No doubt she had been sought often in marriage, but never until lately had Lorania seriously thought of marrying. Sibyl said that she was too unsentimental to

marry. Really she was too romantic. She had a longing to be loved, not in the quiet, matter-of-fact manner of her suitors, but with the passion of the poets. Therefore the presence of another skeleton in Mrs. Ellis's closet, because she knew about a certain handsome Italian marquis who at this period was conducting an impassioned wooing by mail. Margaret did not fancy the marquis. He was not an American. He would take Lorania away. She thought his very virtue florid, and suspected that he had learned his love-making in a bad school. She dropped dark hints that frightened Lorania, who would sometimes piteously demand, "Don't you think he *could* care for me — for — for myself?" Margaret knew that she had an overweening distrust of her own appearance. How many tears she had shed first and last over her unhappy plumpness it would be hard to reckon. She made no account of her satin skin, or her glossy black hair, or her lustrous violet eyes with their long, black lashes, or her flashing white teeth; she glanced dismally at her shape and scornfully at her features, good, honest, irregular American features, that might not satisfy a Greek critic, but suited each other and pleased her countrymen. And then

she would sigh heavily over her figure. Her friend had not the heart to impute the marquis's beautiful, artless compliments to mercenary motives. After all, the Italian was a good fellow, according to the point of view of his own race, if he did intend to live on his wife's money, and had a very varied assortment of memories of women.

But Margaret dreaded and disliked him all the more for his good qualities. To-day this secret apprehension flung a cloud over the bicycle enthusiasm. She could not help wondering whether at this moment Lorania was not thinking of the marquis, who rode a wheel and a horse admirably.

"Aunt Lorania," said Sibyl, "there comes Mr. Winslow. Shall I run out and ask him about those cloth-of-gold roses? The aphides are eating them all up."

"Yes, to be sure, dear; but don't let Ferguson suspect what you are talking of; he might feel hurt."

Ferguson was the gardener. Miss Hopkins left her note to go to the window. Below she saw a mettled horse, with tossing head and silken skin, restlessly fretting on his bit and pawing the dust in front of the fence, while his rider, hat in hand, talked with the young girl. He

was a little man, a very little man, in a gray business suit of the best cut and material. An air of careful and dainty neatness was diffused about both horse and rider. He bent towards Miss Sibyl's charming person a thin, alert, fair face. His head was finely shaped, the brown hair worn away a little on the temples. He smiled gravely at intervals; the smile told that he had a dimple in his cheek.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Ellis, "whether Mr. Winslow can have a penchant for Sibyl?"

Lorania opened her eyes. At this moment Mr. Winslow had caught sight of her at the window, and he bowed almost to his saddle-bow; Sibyl was saying something at which she laughed, and he visibly reddened. It was a peculiarity of his that his color turned easily. In a second his hat was on his head and his horse bounded half across the road.

"Hardly, I think," said Lorania. "How well he rides! I never knew any one ride better—in this country."

"I suppose Sibyl would ridicule such a thing," said Mrs. Ellis, continuing her own train of thought, and yet vaguely disturbed by the last sentence.

"Why should she?"

"Well, he is so little, for one thing,

and she is so tall. And then Sibyl thinks a great deal of social position."

"He is a Winslow," said Lorania, arching her neck unconsciously—"a lineal descendant from Kenelm Winslow, who came over in the *May*—"

"But his mother—"

"I don't know anything about his mother before she came here. Oh, of course I know the gossip that she was a niece of the overseer at a village poor-house, and that her husband quarrelled with all his family and married her in the poor-house, and I know that when he died here she would not take a cent from the Winslows, nor let them have the boy. She is the meekest-looking little woman, but she must have an iron streak in her somewhere, for she was left without enough money to pay the funeral expenses, and she educated the boy and accumulated money enough to pay for this place they have.

"She used to run a laundry, and made money; but when Cyril got a place in the bank she sold out the laundry and went into chickens and vegetables; she told somebody that it wasn't so profitable as the laundry, but it was more genteel, and Cyril being now in a position of trust at the bank, she must consider *him*. Cyril

swept out the bank. People laughed about it, but, do you know, I rather liked Mrs. Winslow for it. She isn't in the least an assertive woman. How long have we been up here, Maggie? Isn't it four years? And they have been our next-door neighbors, and she has never been inside the house. Nor he either, for that matter, except once when it took fire, you know, and he came in with that funny little chemical engine tucked under his arm, and took off his hat in the same prim, polite way that he takes it off when he talks to Sibyl, and said, 'If you'll excuse me offering advice, Miss Hopkins, it is not necessary to move anything; it mars furniture very much to move it at a fire. I think, if you will allow me, I can extinguish this.' And he did, too, didn't he, as neatly and as coolly as if it were only adding up a column of figures. And offered me the engine as a souvenir."

"Lorania, you never told me that!"

"It seemed like making fun of him, when he had been so kind. I declined as civilly as I could. I hope I didn't hurt his feelings. I meant to pay a visit to his mother and ask them to dinner, but you know I went to England that week, and somehow when I came back it was difficult. It seems a little odd we

never have seen more of the Winslows, but I fancy they don't want either to intrude or to be intruded on. But he is certainly very obliging about the garden. Think of all the slips and flowers he has given us, and the advice—"

"All passed over the fence. It is funny our neighborly good offices which we render at arm's-length. How long have you known him?"

"Oh, a long time. He is cashier of my bank, you know. First he was teller, then assistant cashier, and now for five years he has been cashier. The president wants to resign and let him be president, but he hardly has enough stock for that. But Oliver says" (Oliver was Miss Hopkins's brother) "that there isn't a shrewder or straighter banker in the state. Oliver knows him. He says he is a sandy little fellow."

"Well, he is," assented Mrs. Ellis. "It isn't many cashiers would let robbers stab them and shoot them and leave them for dead rather than give up the combination of the safe!"

"He wouldn't take a cent for it, either, and he saved ever so many thousand dollars. Yes, he *is* brave. I went to the same school with him once, and saw him fight a big boy twice his size—such a nas-

ty boy, who called me 'Fatty,' and made a kissing noise with his lips just to scare me—and poor little Cyril Winslow got awfully beaten, and when I saw him on the ground, with his nose bleeding and that big brute pounding him, I ran to the water-bucket, and poured the whole bucket on that big, bullying boy and stopped the fight, just as the teacher got on the scene. I cried over little Cyril Winslow. He was crying himself. 'I ain't crying because he hurt me,' he sobbed; 'I'm crying because I'm so mad I didn't lick him!' I wonder if he remembers that episode?"

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Ellis.

"Maggie, what makes you think he is falling in love with Sibyl?"

Mrs. Ellis laughed. "I dare say he *isn't* in love with Sibyl," said she. "I think the main reason was his always riding by here instead of taking the shorter road down the other street."

"Does he always ride by here? I hadn't noticed."

"Always!" said Mrs. Ellis. "*I* have noticed."

"I am sorry for him," said Lorania, musingly. "I think Sibyl is very much taken with that young Captain Carr at the Arsenal. Young girls always affect the army. He is a nice fellow, but I

don't think he is the man Winslow is. Now, Maggie, advise me about the suit. I don't want to look like the escaped fat lady of a museum."

Lorania thought no more of Sibyl's love-affairs. If she thought of the Winslows, it was to wish that Mrs. Winslow would sell or rent her pasture, which, in addition to her own and Mrs. Ellis's pastures thrown into one, would make such a delightful bicycle-track.

The Winslow house was very different from the two villas that were the pride of Fairport. A little story-and-a-half cottage peeped out on the road behind the tall maples that were planted when Winslow was a boy. But there was a wonderful green velvet lawn, and the tulips and sweet-peas and pansies that blazed softly nearer the house were as beautiful as those over which Miss Lorania's gardener toiled and worried.

Mrs. Winslow was a little woman who showed the fierce struggle of her early life only in the deeper lines between her delicate eyebrows and the expression of melancholy patience in her brown eyes.

She always wore a widow's cap and a black gown. In the mornings she donned a blue figured apron of stout and serviceable stuff; in the afternoon an apron of

that sheer white lawn used by bishops and smart young waitresses. Of an afternoon, in warm weather, she was accustomed to sit on the eastern piazza, next to the Hopkins place, and rock as she sewed. She was thus sitting and sewing when she beheld an extraordinary procession cross the Hopkins lawn. First marched the tall trainer, Shuey Cardigan, who worked by day in the Lossing furniture-factory, and gave bicycle lessons at the armory evenings. He was clad in a white sweater and buff leggings, and was wheeling a lady's bicycle. Behind him walked Miss Hopkins in a gray suit, the skirt of which only came to her ankles—she always so dignified in her toilets.

"Land's sakes!" gasped Mrs. Winslow, "if she ain't going to ride a bike! Well, what next?"

What really happened next was the sneaking (for no other word does justice to the cautious and circuitous movements of her) of Mrs. Winslow to the stable, which had one window facing the Hopkins pasture. No cows were grazing in the pasture. All around the grassy plateau twinkled a broad brownish-yellow track. At one side of this track a bench had been placed, and a table, pleasing to the eye, with jugs and glasses. Mrs.

Ellis, in a suit of the same undignified brevity and ease as Miss Hopkins's, sat on the bench supporting her own wheel. Shuey Cardigan was drawn up to his full six feet of strength, and, one arm in the air, was explaining the theory of the balance of power. It was an uncanny moment to Lorania. She eyed the glistening, restless thing that slipped beneath her hand, and her fingers trembled. If she could have fled in secret she would. But since flight was not possible, she assumed a firm expression. Mrs. Ellis wore a smile of studied and sickly cheerfulness.

"Don't you think it very *high?*" said Lorania. "I can *never* get up on it!"

"It will be by the block at first," said Shuey, in the soothing tones of a jockey to a nervous horse; "it's easy by the block. And I'll be steadying it, of course."

"Don't they have any with larger saddles? It is a *very* small saddle."

"They're all of a size. It wouldn't look sporty larger; it would look like a special make. Yous wouldn't want a special make."

Lorania thought that she would be thankful for a special make, but she suppressed the unsportsmanlike thought. "The pedals are very small too, Cardigan. Are you *sure* they can hold me?"

"They would hold two of ye, Miss Hopkins. Now sit aisy and graceful as ye would on your chair at home, hold the shoulders back, and toe in a bit on the pedals—ye won't be skinning your ankles so much then—and hold your foot up ready to get the other pedal. Hold light on the steering-bar. Push off hard. *Now!*"

"Will you hold me? I am going—Oh, it's like riding an earthquake!"

Here Shuey made a run, letting the wheel have its own wild way—to reach the balance. "Keep the front wheel under you!" he cried, cheerfully. "Niver mind *where* you go. Keep a-pedalling; whatever you do, keep a-pedalling!"

"But I haven't got but one pedal!" gasped the rider.

"Ye lost it?"

"No; I *never had* but one! Oh, don't let me fall!"

"Oh, ye lost it in the beginning; now, then, I'll hold it steady, and you get both feet right. Here we go!"

Swaying frightfully from side to side, and wrenched from capsizing the wheel by the full exercise of Shuey's great muscles, Miss Hopkins reeled over the track, At short intervals she lost her pedals, and her feet, for some strange reason, instead

of seeking the lost, simply curled up as if afraid of being hit. She gripped the steering-handles with an iron grasp, and her turns were such as an engine makes. Nevertheless, Shuey got her up the track for some hundred feet, and then by a herculean sweep turned her round and rolled her back to the block. It was at this painful moment, when her whole being was concentrated on the effort to keep from toppling against Shuey, and even more to keep from toppling away from him, that Lorania's strained gaze suddenly fell on the frightened and sympathetic face of Mrs. Winslow. The good woman saw no fun in the spectacle, but rather an awful risk to life and limb. Their eyes met. Not a change passed over Miss Hopkins's features; but she looked up as soon as she was safe on the ground, and smiled. In a moment, before Mrs. Winslow could decide whether to run or to stand her ground, she saw the cyclist approaching—on foot.

"Won't you come in and sit down?" she said, smiling. "We are trying our new wheels."

And because she did not know how to refuse, Mrs. Winslow suffered herself to be handed over the fence. She sat on the bench beside Miss Hopkins in the prim attitude which had pertained to

gentility in her youth, her hands loosely clasping each other, her feet crossed at the ankles.

"It's an awful sight, ain't it?" she breathed, "those little shiny things; I don't see how you ever git on them."

"I don't get on them," said Miss Hopkins. "The only way I shall ever learn to start off is to start without the pedals. Does your son ride, Mrs. Winslow?"

"No, ma'am," said Mrs. Winslow; "but he knows how. When he was a boy nothing would do but he must have a bicycle, one of those things most as big as a mill wheel, and if you fell off you broke yourself somewhere, sure. I always expected he'd be brought home in pieces. So I don't think he'd have any manner of difficulty. Why, look at your friend; she's 'most riding alone!"

"She could always do everything better than I," cried Lorania, with ungrudging admiration. "See how she jumps off! Now I can't jump off any more than I can jump on. It seems so ridiculous to be told to press hard on the pedal on the side where you want to jump, and swing your further leg over first, and cut a kind of a figure eight with your legs, and turn your wheel the way you don't want to go —all at once. While I'm trying to think

of all those directions I always fall off. I got that wheel only yesterday, and fell before I even got away from the block. One of my arms looks like a Persian ribbon."

Mrs. Winslow cried out in unfeigned sympathy. She wished Miss Hopkins would use her liniment that she used for Cyril when he was hurt by the burglars at the bank; he was bruised "terrible."

"That must have been an awful time to you," said Lorania, looking with more interest than she had ever felt on the meek little woman; and she noticed the tremble in the decorously clasped hands.

"Yes, ma'am," was all she said.

"I've often looked over at you on the piazza, and thought how cosey you looked. Mr. Winslow always seems to be at home evenings."

"Yes, ma'am. We sit a great deal on the piazza. Cyril's a good boy; he wa'n't nine when his father died; and he's been like a man helping me. There never was a boy had such willing little feet. And he'd set right there on the steps and pat my slipper and say what he'd git me when he got to earning money; and he's got me every last thing, foolish and all, that he said. There's that black satin gown, a sin and a shame for a plain body like me,

but he would git it. Cyril's got a beautiful disposition too, jest like his pa's, and he's a handy man about the house, and prompt at his meals. I wonder sometimes if Cyril was to git married if his wife would mind his running over now and then and setting with me awhile."

She was speaking more rapidly, and her eyes strayed wistfully over to the Hopkins piazza, where Sibyl was sitting with the young soldier. Lorania looked at her pityingly.

"Why, surely," said she.

"Mothers have kinder selfish feelings," said Mrs. Winslow, moistening her lips and drawing a quick breath, still watching the girl on the piazza. "It's so sweet and peaceful for them, they forget their sons may want something more. But it's kinder hard giving all your little comforts up at once when you've had him right with you so long, and could cook just what he liked, and go right into his room nights if he coughed. It's all right, all right, but it's kinder hard. And beautiful young ladies that have had everything all their lives might—might not understand that a homespun old mother isn't wanting to force herself on them at all when they have company, and they have no call to fear it."

There was no doubt, however obscure the words seemed, that Mrs. Winslow had a clear purpose in her mind, nor that she was tremendously in earnest. Little blotches of red dabbled her cheeks, her breath came more quickly, and she swallowed between her words. Lorania could see the quiver in the muscles of her throat. She clasped her hands tight lest they should shake. "He's in love with Sibyl," thought Lorania. "The poor woman!" She felt sorry for her, and she spoke gently and reassuringly:

"No girl with a good heart can help feeling tenderly towards her husband's mother."

Mrs. Winslow nodded. "You're real comforting," said she. She was silent a moment, and then said, in a different tone: "You 'ain't got a large enough track. Wouldn't you like to have our pasture too?"

Lorania expressed her gratitude, and invited the Winslows to see the practice.

"My niece will come out to-morrow," she said, graciously.

"Yes? She's a real fine-appearing young lady," said Mrs. Winslow.

Both the cyclists exulted. Neither of them, however, was prepared to behold the track made and the fence down the

very next morning when they came out, about ten o'clock, to the west side of Miss Hopkins's boundaries.

"As sure as you live, Maggie," exclaimed Lorania, eagerly, "he's got it all done! Now that is something like a lover. I only hope his heart won't be bruised as black and blue as I am with the wheel!"

"Shuey says the only harm your falls do you is to take away your confidence," said Mrs. Ellis.

"He wouldn't say so if he could see my *knees!*" retorted Miss Hopkins.

Mrs. Ellis, it will be observed, sheered away from the love-affairs of Mr. Cyril Winslow. She had not yet made up her mind. And Mrs. Ellis, who had been married, did not jump at conclusions regarding the heart of man so rapidly as her spinster friend. She preferred to talk of the bicycle. Nor did Miss Hopkins refuse the subject. To her at this moment the most important object on the globe was the shining machine which she would allow no hand but hers to oil and dust. Both Mrs. Ellis and she were simply prostrated (as to their mental powers) by this new sport. They could not think nor talk nor read of anything but *the wheel.* This is a peculiarity of the bicyclist. No

other sport appears to make such havoc with the mind.

One can learn to swim without describing his sensations to every casual acquaintance or hunting up the natatorial columns in the newspapers. One may enjoy riding a horse and yet go about his ordinary business with an equal mind. One learns to play golf and still remains a peaceful citizen who can discuss politics with interest. But the cyclist, man or woman, is soaked in every pore with the delight and the perils of wheeling. He talks of it (as he thinks of it) incessantly. For this fatuous passion there is one excuse. Other sports have the fearful delight of danger and the pleasure of the consciousness of dexterity and the dogged Anglo-Saxon joy of combat and victory; but no other sport restores to middle age the pure, exultant, muscular intoxication of childhood. Only on the wheel can an elderly woman feel as she felt when she ran and leaped and frolicked amid the flowers as a child.

Lorania, of course, no longer jumped or ran; she kicked in the Delsarte exercises, but it was a measured, calculated, one may say cold-blooded kick, which limbered her muscles but did not restore her youthful glow of soul. Her legs and not

her spirits pranced. The same thing may be said for Margaret Ellis. Now, between their accidents, they obtained glimpses of an exquisite exhilaration. And there was also to be counted the approval of their consciences, for they felt that no Turkish bath could wring out moisture from their systems like half an hour's pumping at the bicycle treadles. Lorania during the month had ridden through one bottle of liniment and two of witch-hazel, and by the end of the second bottle could ride a short distance alone. But Lorania could not yet dismount unassisted, and several times she had felled poor Winslow to the earth when he rashly adventured to stop her. Captain Carr had a peculiar, graceful fling of the arm, catching the saddle-bar with one hand while he steadied the handles with the other. He did not hesitate in the least to grab Lorania's belt if necessary. But poor modest Winslow, who fell upon the wheel and dared not touch the hem of a lady's bicycle skirt, was as one in the path of a cyclone, and appeared daily in a fresh pair of white trousers.

"Yous have now," Shuey remarked, impressively, one day—"yous have now arrived at the most difficult and dangerous period in learning the wheel. It's

similar to a baby when it's first learned to walk but 'ain't yet got sense in walking. When it was little it would stay put wherever ye put it, and it didn't know enough to go by itself, which is similar to you. When I was holding ye you couldn't fall, but now you're off alone depindent on yourself, object-struck by every tree, taking most of the pasture to turn in, and not able to git off save by falling—"

"Oh, couldn't you go with her somehow?" exclaimed Mrs. Winslow, appalled at the picture. "Wouldn't a rope round her be some help? I used to put it round Cyril when he was learning to walk."

"Well, no, ma'am," said Shuey, patiently. "Don't you be scared; the riding will come; she's getting on grandly. And ye should see Mr. Winslow. 'Tis a pleasure to teach him. He rode in one lesson. I ain't learning him nothing but tricks now."

"But, Mr. Winslow, why don't you ride here—with us?" said Sibyl, with her coquettish and flattering smile. "We're always hearing of your beautiful riding. Are we never to see it?"

"I think Mr. Winslow is waiting for that swell English cycle suit that I hear about," said the captain, grinning; and Winslow grew red to his eyelids.

Lorania gave an indignant side glance at Sibyl. Why need the girl make game of an honest man who loved her? Sibyl was biting her lips and darting side glances at the captain. She called the pasture practice slow, but she seemed, nevertheless, to enjoy herself sitting on the bench, the captain on one side and Winslow on the other, rattling off her girlish jokes, while her aunt and Mrs. Ellis, with the anxious, set faces of the beginner, were pedalling frantically after Cardigan. Lorania began to pity Winslow, for it was growing plain to her that Sibyl and the captain understood each other. She thought that even if Sibyl did care for the soldier, she need not be so careless of Winslow's feelings. She talked with the cashier herself, trying to make amends for Sibyl's absorption in the other man, and she admired the fortitude that concealed the pain that he must feel. It became quite the expected thing for the Winslows to be present at the practice; but Winslow had not yet appeared on his wheel. He used to bring a box of candy with him, or rather three boxes—one for each lady, he said—and a box of peppermints for his mother. He was always very attentive to his mother.

"And fancy, Aunt Margaret," laughed

Sibyl, "he has asked both auntie and me to the theatre. He is not going to compromise himself by singling one of us out. He's a careful soul. By the way, Aunt Margaret, Mrs. Winslow was telling me yesterday that I am the image of auntie at my age. Am I? Do I look like her? Was she as slender as I?"

"Almost," said Mrs. Ellis, who was not so inflexibly truthful as her friend.

"No, Sibyl," said Lorania, with a deep, deep sigh, "I was always plump; I was a chubby *child!* And oh, what do you think I heard in the crowd at Manly's once? One woman said to another, 'Miss Hopkins has got a wheel.' 'Miss Sibyl?' said the other. 'No; the stout Miss Hopkins,' said the first creature; and the second—" Lorania groaned.

"What *did* she say to make you feel that way?"

"She said—she said, 'Oh my!'" answered Lorania, with a dying look.

"Well, she was horrid," said Mrs. Ellis; "but you know you have grown thin. Come on; let's ride!"

"I *never* shall be able to ride," said Lorania, gloomily. "I can get on, but I can't get off. And they've taken off the brake, so I can't stop. And I'm object-struck by everything I look at. Some

day I shall look down-hill. Well, my will's in the lower drawer of the mahogany desk."

Perhaps Lorania had an occult inkling of the future. For this is what happened: That evening Winslow rode on to the track in his new English bicycle suit, which had just come. He hoped that he didn't look like a fool in those queer clothes. But the instant he entered the pasture he saw something that drove everything else out of his head, and made him bend over the steering-bar and race madly across the green; Miss Hopkins's bicycle was running away down-hill! Cardigan, on foot, was pelting obliquely, in the hopeless thought to intercept her, while Mrs. Ellis, who was reeling over the ground with her own bicycle, wheeled as rapidly as she could to the brow of the hill, where she tumbled off, and abandoning the wheel, rushed on foot to her friend's rescue.

She was only in time to see a flash of silver and ebony and a streak of brown dart before her vision and swim down the hill like a bird. Lorania was still in the saddle, pedalling from sheer force of habit, and clinging to the handle bars. Below the hill was a stone wall, and farther was a creek. There was a narrow

opening in the wall where the cattle went down to drink; if she could steer through that she would have nothing worse than soft water and mud; but there was not one chance in a thousand that she could pass that narrow space. Mrs. Winslow, horror-stricken, watched the rescuer, who evidently was cutting across to catch the bicycle.

"He's riding out of sight!" thought Shuey, in the rear. He himself did not slacken his speed, although he could not be in time for the catastrophe. Suddenly he stiffened; Winslow was close to the runaway wheel.

"Grab her!" yelled Shuey. "Grab her by the belt! *Oh, Lord!*"

The exclamation exploded like the groan of a shell. For while Winslow's bicycling was all that could be wished, and he flung himself in the path of the on-coming wheel with marvellous celerity and precision, he had not the power to withstand the never yet revealed number of pounds carried by Miss Lorania, impelled by the rapid descent and gathering momentum at every whirl. They met; he caught her; but instantly he was rolling down the steep incline and she was doubled up on the grass. He crashed sickeningly against the stone wall; she

lay stunned and still on the sod; and their friends, with beating hearts, slid down to them. Mrs. Winslow was on the brow of the hill. She blesses Shuey to this day for the shout he sent up, "Nobody killed, and I guess no bones broken."

When Margaret went home that evening, having seen her friend safely in bed, not much the worse for her fall, she was told that Cardigan wished to see her. Shuey produced something from his pocket, saying: "I picked this up on the hill, ma'am, after the accident. It maybe belongs to him, or it maybe belongs to her; I'm thinking the safest way is to just give it to you." He handed Mrs. Ellis a tiny gold-framed miniature of Lorania in a red leather case.

The morning was a sparkling June morning, dewy and fragrant, and the sunlight burnished handle and pedal of the friends' bicycles standing on the piazza unheeded. It was the hour for morning practice, but Miss Hopkins slept in her chamber, and Mrs. Ellis sat in the little parlor adjoining, and thought.

She did not look surprised at the maid's announcement that Mrs. Winslow begged to see her for a few moments. Mrs.

Winslow was pale. She was a good sketch of discomfort on the very edge of her chair, clad in the black silk which she wore Sundays, her head crowned with her bonnet of state, and her hands stiff in a pair of new gloves.

"I hope you'll excuse me not sending up a card," she began. "Cyril got me some going on a year ago, and I *thought* I could lay my hand right on 'em, but I'm so nervous this morning I hunted all over, and they wasn't anywhere. I won't keep you. I just wanted to ask if you picked up anything—a little red Russia-leather case—"

"Was it a miniature—a miniature of my friend Miss Hopkins?"

"I thought it all over, and I came to explain. You no doubt think it strange; and I can assure you that my son never let any human being look at that picture. I never knew about it myself till it was lost and he got out of his bed—he ain't hardly able to walk—and staggered over here to look for it, and I followed him; and so he *had* to tell me. He had it painted from a picture that came out in the papers. He felt it was an awful liberty. But—you don't know how my boy feels, Mrs. Ellis; he has worshipped that woman for years. He 'ain't never

had a thought of anybody but her since they was children in school; and yet he's been so modest and so shy of pushing himself forward that he didn't do a thing until I put him on to help you with this bicycle."

Margaret Ellis did not know what to say. She thought of the marquis; and Mrs. Winslow poured out her story: "He 'ain't never said a word to me till this morning. But don't I *know?* Don't I know who looked out so careful for her investments? Don't I know who was always looking out for her interest, silent, and always keeping himself in the background? Why, she couldn't even buy a cow that he wa'n't looking round to see that she got a good one! 'Twas him saw the gardener, and kept him from buying that cow with tuberculosis, 'cause he knew about the herd. He knew by finding out. He worshipped the very cows she owned, you may say, and I've seen him patting and feeding up her dogs; it's to our house that big mastiff always goes every night. Mrs. Ellis, it ain't often that a woman gits love such as my son is offering, only he da'sn't offer it, and it ain't often a woman is loved by such a good man as my son. He 'ain't got any bad habits; he'll die before he wrongs anybody; and he has

got the sweetest temper you ever see; and he's the tidiest man about the house you could ask, and the promptest about meals."

Mrs. Ellis looked at her flushed face, and sent another flood of color into it, for she said, "Mrs. Winslow, I don't know how much good I may be able to do, but I am on your side."

Her eyes followed the little black figure when it crossed the lawn. She wondered whether her advice was good, for she had counselled that Winslow come over in the evening.

"Maggie," said a voice. Lorania was in the doorway. "Maggie," she said, "I ought to tell you that I heard every word."

"Then *I* can tell *you*," cried Mrs. Ellis, "that he is fifty times more of a man than the marquis, and loves you fifty thousand times better!"

Lorania made no answer, not even by a look. What she felt, Mrs. Ellis could not guess. Nor was she any wiser when Winslow appeared at her gate, just as the sun was setting.

"I didn't think I would better intrude on Miss Hopkins," said he, "but perhaps you could tell me how she is this evening. My mother told me how kind you were, and perhaps you—you would ad-

vise me if I might venture to send Miss Hopkins some flowers."

Out of the kindness of her heart Mrs. Ellis averted her eyes from his face; thus she was able to perceive Lorania saunter out of the Hopkins gate. So changed was she by the bicycle practice that, wrapped in her niece's shawl, she made Margaret think of the girl. An inspiration flashed to her; she knew the cashier's dependence on his eye-glasses, and he was not wearing them.

"If you want to know how Miss Hopkins is, why not speak to her niece now?" said she.

He started. He saw Miss Sibyl, as he supposed, and he went swiftly down the street. "Miss Sibyl!" he began, "may I ask how is your aunt?"—and then she turned.

She blushed, then she laughed aloud. "Has the bicycle done so much for me?" said she.

"The bicycle didn't need to do *anything* for you!" he cried, warmly.

Mrs. Ellis, a little distance in the rear, heard, turned, and walked thoughtfully away. "They're off," said she—she had acquired a sporting tinge of thought from Shuey Cardigan. "If with that start he can't make the running, it's a wonder."

"I have invited Mr. Winslow and his mother to dinner," said Miss Hopkins, in the morning. "Will you come too, Maggie?"

"I'll back him against the marquis," thought Margaret, gleefully.

A week later Lorania said: "I really think I must be getting thinner. Fancy Mr. Winslow, who is so clear-sighted, mistaking me for Sibyl! He says—I told him how I had suffered from my figure—he says it can't be what he has suffered from his. Do you think him so very short, Maggie? Of course he isn't tall, but he has an elegant figure, I think, and I never saw anywhere such a rider!"

Mrs. Ellis answered, heartily, "He isn't very small, and he is a beautiful figure on the wheel!" And added to herself, "I know what was in that letter she sent yesterday to the marquis! But to think of its all being due to the bicycle!"

The Marrying of Esther

BY MARY M. MEARS

"SET there and cry; it's so sensible; and I 'ain't said that a June weddin' wouldn't be a little nicer. But what you goin' to live on? Joe can't git his money that soon."

"He—said he thought he could manage. But I won't be married at all if I can't have it—right."

"Well, you can have it right. All is, there are some folks in this town that if they don't calculate doin' real well by you, I don't feel called upon to invite."

"I don't know what you mean," sobbed the girl. She sat by the kitchen table, her face hidden in her arms. Her mother stood looking at her tenderly, and yet with a certain anger.

"I mean about the presents. You've worked in the church, you've sung in the choir for years, and now it's a chance for folks to show that they appreciate it, and without they're goin' to— Boxes of cake

would be plenty if they wa'n't goin' to serve you any better than they did Ella Plummer."

Esther Robinson lifted her head. She was quite large, in a soft young way, and her skin was as pure as a baby's. "But you can't know beforehand how they're going to treat me!"

"Yes, I can know beforehand, too, and if you're set on next month, it's none too soon to be seein' about it. I've a good mind to step over to Mis' Lawrence's and Mis' Stetson's this afternoon."

"Mother! You—wouldn't ask 'em anything?"

Mrs. Robinson hung away her dish-towel; then she faced Esther. "Of course I wouldn't *ask* 'em; there's other ways of findin' out besides *asking*. I'd bring the subject round by saying I hoped there wouldn't be many duplicates, and I'd git out of 'em what they intended givin' without seemin' to." Esther looked at her mother with a sort of fascination. "Then we could give some idea about the refreshments; for I ain't a-goin' to have no elaborate layout without I *do* know; and it ain't because I grudge the money, either," she added, in swift self-defence.

Mrs. Robinson was a good manager of

the moderate means her husband had left her, but she was not parsimonious or inhospitable. Now she was actuated by a fierce maternal jealousy. Esther, despite her pleasant ways and her helpfulness, was often overlooked in a social way. This was due to her mother. The more pretentious laughed about Mrs. Robinson, and though the thrifty, contented housewife never missed the amenities which might have been extended to her, she was keenly alive to any slights put upon her daughter. And so it was now.

Mrs. Lawrence, a rich, childless old lady, lived next door, and about four o'clock she went over there. The girl watched her departure doubtfully, but the possibility of not having a large wedding kept her from giving a full expression to her feelings.

Esther had always dreamed of her wedding; she had looked forward to it just as definitely before she met Joe Elsworth as after her engagement to him. There would be flowers and guests and feasting, and she would be the centre of it all in a white dress and veil.

She had never thought about there being any presents. Now for the first time she thought of them as an added glory, but her imagination did not extend to the

separate articles or to their givers. Esther never pictured her uncle Jonas at the wedding, yet he would surely be in attendance in his rough farmer clothes, his grizzled, keen old face towering above the other guests. She did not picture her friends as she really knew them; the young men would be fine gentlemen, and the girls ladies in wonderful toilets. As for herself and Joe, hidden away in a bureau drawer Esther had a poster of one of Frohman's plays. It represented a bride and groom standing together in a drift of orange blossoms.

Mrs. Robinson did not return at supper-time, and Esther ate alone. At eight o'clock Joe Elsworth came. She met him at the door, and they kissed in the entry. Then Joe preceded her in, and hung up his cap on a projecting knob of the what-not—that was where he always put it. He glanced into the dining-room and took in the waiting table.

"Haven't you had supper yet?"

"Mother isn't home."

He came towards her swiftly; his eyes shone with a sudden elated tenderness. She raised her arms and turned away her face, but he swept aside the ineffectual barrier. When he let her go she seated herself on the farther side of the room.

Her glance was full of a soft rebuke. He met it, then looked down smilingly and awkwardly at his shoes.

"Where did you say your ma had gone?"

"She's gone to Mis' Lawrence's, and a few other places."

"Oh, calling. Old Mis' Norton goes about twice a year, and I ask her what it amounts to."

"I guess you'll find ma's calls 'll amount to something."

"How's that?" he demanded.

"She's—going to try and find out what they intend giving."

"What they intend giving?"

"Yes. And without they intend giving something worth while, she says she won't invite 'em, and maybe we won't have a big wedding at all," she finished, pathetically.

Joe did not answer. Esther stole an appealing glance at him.

"Does it seem a queer thing to do?"

"Well, yes, rather."

Her face quivered. "She said I'd done so much for Mis' Lawrence—"

"Well, you have, and I've wished a good many times that you wouldn't. I'm sure I never knuckled to her, though she is my great-aunt."

"I never knuckled to her, either," protested Esther.

"You've done a sight more for her than I would have done, fixin' her dresses and things, and she with more money than anybody else in town. But your mother ain't going to call on everybody, is she?" he asked, anxiously.

"Of course she ain't. Only she said, if it was going to be in June—but I don't want it to be ever," she added, covering her face.

"Oh, it's all right," said Joe, penitently. He went over and put his arm around her. Nevertheless, his eyes held a worried look.

Joe's father had bound him out to a farmer by the name of Norton until his majority, when the sum of seven hundred dollars, all the little fortune the father had left, together with three hundred more from Norton, was to be turned over to him. But Joe would not be twenty-one until October. It was going to be difficult for him to arrange for the June wedding Esther desired. He was very much in love, however, and presently he lifted his boyish cheek from her hair.

"I think I'll take that cottage of Lanham's; it's the only vacant house in the village, and he's promised to wait for the

rent, so that confounded old Norton needn't advance me a cent."

Esther flushed. "What do you suppose makes him act so?" she questioned, though she knew.

Joe blushed too. "He don't like it because I'm going to work in the factory when it opens. But Mis' Norton and Sarah have done everything for me," he added, decidedly.

Up to the time of his engagement Joe had been in the habit of showing Sarah Norton an occasional brotherly attention, and he would have continued to do so had not Esther and Mrs. Robinson interfered—Esther from girlish jealousy, and her mother because she did not approve of the family, she said. She could not say she did not approve of Sarah, for there was not a more upright, self-respecting girl in the village. But Sarah, because of her father's miserliness, often went out for extra work when the neighbors needed help, and this was the real cause of Mrs. Robinson's feeling. Unconsciously she made the same distinction between Sarah Norton and Esther that some of the more ambitious of the village mothers made between their girls and her own daughter. Then it was common talk that old Jim Norton, for obvi-

ous reasons, was displeased with Joe's matrimonial plans, but Mrs. Robinson professed to believe that the wife and daughter were really the ones disappointed. Now Esther began twisting a button of Joe's coat.

"I don't believe mother 'll ask either of 'em to the wedding," said she.

When Mrs. Robinson entered, Esther stood expectant and fearful by the table. Her mother drew up a chair and reached for the bread.

"I didn't stop anywhere for supper. You've had yours, 'ain't you?"

The girl nodded.

"Joe come?"

"He just left."

But Mrs. Robinson was not to be hurried into divulging the result of her calls. She remained massively mysterious. Esther began to wish she had not hurried Joe off so unceremoniously. After her first cup of tea, however, her mother asked for a slip of paper and a pencil. "I want that pencil in my machine drawer, that writes black, and any kind of paper 'll do," she said.

Esther brought them; then she took up her sewing. She was not without a certain self-restraint. Mrs. Robinson, between her sips of tea, wrote. The soft

gurgle of her drinking annoyed Esther, and she had a tingling desire to snatch the paper. After a last misdirected placing of her cup in her plate, however, her mother looked up and smiled triumphantly.

"I guess we'll have to plan something different than boxes of cake. Listen to this; Mis' Lawrence— No, I won't read that yet. Mis' Manning—I went in there because I thought about her not inviting you when she gave that library party—one salt and pepper with rose-buds painted on 'em."

Esther leaned forward; her face was crimson.

"You needn't look so," remonstrated her mother. "It was all I could do to keep from laughing at the way she acted. I just mentioned that we were only goin' to invite those you were indebted to, and she went and fetched out that salt and pepper. I believe she said they was intended in the first place for some relative that didn't git married in the end."

The girl made an inarticulate noise in her throat. Her mother continued, in a loud, impressive tone:

"Mis' Stetson—something worked. She hasn't quite decided what, but she's goin' to let me know about it. Jane Watson—"

"You didn't go *there,* mother!"

Mrs. Robinson treated her daughter to a contemptuous look. "I guess I've got sense. Jane was at Mis' Stetson's, and when I came away she went along with me, and insisted that I should stop and see some lamp-lighters she'd got to copy from—those paper balls. She seemed afraid a string of those wouldn't be enough, but I told her how pretty they was, and how much you'd be pleased."

"I guess I'll think a good deal more of 'em than I will of Mis' Manning's salt and pepper." Esther was very near tears.

"Next I went to the Rogerses, and they've about concluded to give you a lamp; and they can afford to. Then that's all the places I've been, except to Mis' Lawrence's, and she"—Mrs. Robinson paused for emphasis—"she's goin' to give you a silver *tea-set!*"

Esther looked at her mother, her red lips apart.

"That was the first place I called, and I said pretty plain what I was gittin' at; but after I knew about the water-set, that settled what kind of weddin' we'd have."

But the next morning the world looked different. Her rheumatic foot ached, and that always affected her temper; but when

they sat down to sew, the real cause of her irascibleness came out.

"Mis' Lawrence wa'n't any more civil than she need be," she remarked. "I guess she'd decided she'd got to do something, being related to Joe. She said she supposed you were expecting a good many presents; and I said no, you didn't look for many, and there were some that you'd done a good deal for that you knew better than to expect anything from. I was mad. Then she turned kind of red, and mentioned about the water-set."

And in the afternoon a young girl acquaintance added to Esther's perturbation. "I just met Susan Rogers," she confided to the other, "and she said they hated to give that lamp, but they supposed they were in for it."

Esther was not herself for some days. All her pretty dreams were blotted out, and a morbid embarrassment took hold of her; but she was roused to something like her old interest when the presents began to come in and she saw her mother's active preparations for the wedding—the more so as over the village seemed to have spread a pleasant excitement concerning the event. Presents arrived from unexpected sources, so that in-

vitations had to be sent afterwards to the givers. Women who had never crossed the Robinson threshold came now like Hindoo gift-bearers before some deity whom they wished to propitiate. Meeting there, they exchanged droll, half-deprecating glances. Mrs. Robinson's calls had formed the subject of much laughing comment; but weddings were not common in Marshfield, and the desire to be bidden to this one was universal; it spread like an epidemic.

Mrs. Robinson was at first elated. She overlooked the matter of duplicates, and accepted graciously every article that was tendered—from a patch-work quilt to a hem-stitched handkerchief. "You can't have too many of some things," she remarked to Esther. But later she reversed this statement. Match-safes, photograph-frames, and pretty nothings accumulated to an alarming extent.

"Now that's the last pin-cushion you're goin' to take," she declared, as she returned from answering a call at the door one evening. "There's fourteen in the parlor now. Some folks seem to have gone crazy on pin-cushions."

She grew confused, and the next day she went into the parlor, which, owing to the nature of the display, resembled a

booth at a church fair, and made an accurate list of the articles received. When she emerged, her large, handsome face was quite flushed.

"Little wabbly, fall-down things, most of 'em. It 'll take you a week to dust your house if you have all those things standin' round."

"Well, I ain't goin' to put none of 'em away," declared Esther. "I like ornaments."

"Glad you do; you've got enough of 'em, land knows. *Ornaments!*" The very word seemed to incense her. "I guess you'll find there's something needed besides *ornaments* when you come right down to livin'. For one thing, you're awful short of dishes and bedding, and you can't ever have no company—unless," she added, with withering sarcasm, "you give 'em little vases to drink out of, and put 'em to bed under a picture-drape, with a pin-cushion or a scent-bag for a piller."

And from that time Mrs. Robinson accepted no gift without first consulting her list. It became known that she looked upon useful articles with favor, and brooms and flat-irons and bright tinware arrived constantly. Then it was that the heterogeneous collection began

to pall upon Esther. The water-set had not yet been presented, but its magnificence grew upon her, and she persuaded Joe to get a spindle-legged stand on which to place it, although he could not furnish the cottage until October, and had gone in debt for the few necessary things. She pictured the combination first in one corner of the little parlor, then another, finally in a window where it could be seen from the road.

Esther's standards did not vary greatly from her mother's, but she had a bewildered sense that they were somehow stepping from the beaten track of custom. On one or two points, however, she was firm. The few novels that had come within her reach she had conned faithfully. Thus, even before she had a lover, she had decided that the most impressive hour for a wedding was sunrise, and had arranged the procession which was to wend its way towards the church. And in these matters her mother, respecting her superior judgment, stood stanchly by her.

Nevertheless, when the eventful morning arrived she was bitterly disappointed. She had set her heart on having the church bell rung, and overlooked the fact that the meeting-house bell was cracked,

till Joe reminded her. Then the weather was unexpectedly chilly. A damp fog, not yet dispersed by the sun, hung over the barely awakened village, and the little flower-girl shivered. She had a shawl pinned about her, and when the procession was fairly started she tripped over it, and there was a halt while she gathered up the roses and geraniums in her little trembling hands and thrust them back into the basket. Celia Smith tittered. Celia was the bridesmaid, and was accompanied by Joe's friend, red-headed Harry Baker; and Mrs. Robinson and Uncle Jonas, who were far behind, made the most of the delay. Mrs. Robinson often explained that she was not a "good walker," and her brother-in-law tried jocularly to help her along, although he used a cane himself. His weather-beaten old face was beaming, but it was as though the smiles were set between the wrinkles, for he kept his mouth sober. He had a flower in his button-hole, which gave him a festive air, despite the fact that his clothes were distinctly untidy. Several buttons were off: he had no wife to keep them sewed on.

Esther had given but one glance at him. Her head under its lace veil bent lower and lower. The flounces of her

skirt stood out about her like the delicate bell of a hollyhock; she followed the way falteringly. Joe, his young eyes radiant, inclined his curly head towards her, but she did not heed him. The little procession was as an awkward garment which hampered and abashed her; but just as they reached the church the sun crept above the tree-tops, and from the bleakness of dawn the whole scene warmed into the glorious beauty of a June day. The guests lost their aspect of chilled waiting; Esther caught their admiring glances. For one brief moment her triumph was complete; the next she had overstepped its bounds. She went forward scarcely touching Joe's arm. Her great desire became a definite purpose. She whispered to a member of her Sunday-school class, a little fellow. He looked at her wonderingly at first, then darted forward and grasped the rope which dangled down in a corner of the vestibule. He pulled with a will, but even as the old bell responded with a hoarse clank, his arms jerked upward, and with curls flying and fat legs extended he ascended straight to the ceiling.

"Oh, suz, the Lord's taking him right up!" shrieked an old woman, the sepulchral explanation of the broken bell but

serving to intensify her terror; and there were others who refused to understand, even when his sister caught him by the heels. She was very white, and she shook him before she set him down. Too scared to realize where he was, he fought her, his little face quite red, and his blouse strained up so that it revealed the girth of his round little body in its knitted undershirt.

"Le' me go," he whimpered; "she telled me to do it."

His words broke through the general amazement like a stone through the icy surface of a stream. The guests gave way to mirth. Some of the young girls averted their faces; they could not look at Esther. The matrons tilted their bonneted heads towards one another and shook softly. "I thought at first it might be a part of the show," whispered one, "but I guess it wasn't planned."

Esther was conscious of every whisper and every glance; shame seemed to engulf her, but she entered the church holding her head high. When they emerged into the sunshine again, she would have been glad to run away, but she was forced to pause while her mother made an announcement.

"The refreshments will be ready by

ten," she said, "and as we calculate to keep the tables runnin' all day, those that can't come one time can come another."

After which there was a little rice-throwing, and the young couple departed. The frolic partly revived Esther's spirits; but her mother, toiling heavily along with a hard day's work before her, was inclined to speak her mind. Her brother-in-law, however, restrained her.

"Seems to me I never seen anything quite so cute as that little feller a-ringin' that bell for the weddin'. Who put him up to it, anyhow?"

"Why, Esther. She was so set on havin' a 'chime,' as she called it."

"Well, it was a real good idee! A *real* good idee!" and he kept repeating the phrase as though in a perfect ecstasy of appreciation.

When Esther reached home, she and Joe arranged the tables in the side yard, but when the first guest turned in at the gate her mother sent her to the house. "Now you go into the parlor and rest. You can just as well sit under that dove as stand under it," she said.

The girl started listlessly to obey, but the next words revived her like wine:

"I declare it's Mis' Lawrence, and she's

bringing that water-set; she hung on to it till the last minit."

Esther flew to her chamber and donned her veil, which she had laid aside, then sped down-stairs; but when she passed through the parlor she put her hands over her eyes: she wanted to look at the water-set first with Joe. He was no longer helping her mother, and she fluttered about looking for him. The rooms would soon be crowded, and then there would be no opportunity to examine the wonderful gift.

She darted down a foot-path that crossed the yard diagonally. It led to a gap in the stone-wall which opened on a lane. Esther and Joe had been in the habit of walking here of an evening. It was scarcely more than a grassy way overhung by leaning branches of old fruit trees, but it was a short-cut to the cottage Joe had rented. Now Esther's feet, of their own volition, carried her here. She slid through the opening. "Joe!" she called, and her voice had the tremulous cadence of a bird summoning its mate; but it died away in a little smothered cry, for not a rod away was Joe, and sitting on a large stone was Sarah Norton. They had their backs towards her, and were engaged in such an earnest conver-

sation that they did not hear her. Sarah's shoulders moved with her quick breathing; she had a hand on Joe's arm. Esther stood staring, her thin draperies circling about her, and her childish face pale. Then she turned, with a swift impulse to escape, but again she paused, her eyes riveted in the opposite direction. From where she stood the back door of her future home was visible, and two men were carrying out furniture. Involuntarily she opened her lips to call Joe, but no sound came. Yes, they had the bureau; they would probably take the spindle-legged stand next. A strong protective instinct is part of possession, and to Esther that sight was as a magnet to steel. Down the grassy lane she sped, but so lightly that the couple by the wall were as unobservant of her as they were of the wind stirring the long grass.

Sarah Norton rose. "I run every step of the way to get here in time. Please, Joe!" she panted.

He shook his head. "It's real kind of you and your mother, Sarah, but I guess I ain't going to touch any of the money you worked for and earned, and I can't help but think, when I talk to Lanham—"

"I tell you, you can't reason with him in his state!"

"Well, I'll raise it somehow."

"You'll have to be quick about it, then," she returned, concisely. "He'll be here in a few minutes, and it's cash down for the first three months, or he'll let the other party have it."

"But he promised—"

"That don't make any difference. He's drunk, and he thought father'd offer to make you an advance; but father just told him to come down here, that you were being married, and say he'd poke all your things out in the road without you paid."

The young man turned. Sarah blocked his way. She was a tall, good-looking girl, somewhat older than Joe, and she looked straight up into his face.

"See here, Joe; you know what makes father act so, and so do I, and so does mother, and mother and I want you should take this money; it 'll make us feel better." Sarah flushed, but she looked at him as directly as if she had been his sister.

Joe felt an admiration for her that was almost reverence. It carried him for the moment beyond the consideration of his own predicament.

"No, I don't know what makes him act so either," he cried, hotly. "Oh

Lord, Sarah, you sha'n't say such a thing!"

She interrupted him. "Won't you take it?"

He turned again: "You're just as good as you can be, but I can manage some way."

"I'll watch for Lanham," she answered, quietly, "and keep him talking as long as I can. He's just drunk enough to make a scene."

Half-way to the house, Joe met Harry Barker.

"What did she want?" he inquired, curiously.

When Joe told him he plunged into his pocket and drew out two dollars, then offered to go among the young fellows and collect the balance of the amount, but Joe caught hold of him.

"Think of something else."

"I could explain to the boys—"

"You go and ask Mrs. Lawrence if she won't step out on the porch," the other commanded; "she's my great-aunt, and I never asked anything of her before."

But Mrs. Lawrence was not sympathetic. She told Joe flatly that she never lent money, and that the water-set was as much as she could afford to give. "It ain't paid for, though," she added; "and

if you'd rather have the money, I suppose I can send it back. But seems to me I shouldn't have been in such an awful hurry to git married; I should 'a' waited a month or so, till I had something to git married on. But you're just like your father — never had no calculation. Do you want I should return that silver?"

Joe hesitated. It was an easy way out of the difficulty. Then a vision of Esther rose before him, and the innocent preparations she had been making for the display of the gift. "No," he answered, shortly. And Mrs. Lawrence, with a shake of the shoulders as though she threw off all responsibility in her young relative's affairs, bustled away. "I'm going to keep that water-set if everything else has to go," he declared to the astonished Harry. "Let 'em set me out in the road; I guess I'll git along." He had a humorous vision of himself and Esther trudging forth, with the water-set between them, to seek their fortune.

He flung himself from the porch, and was confronted by Jonas Ingram. The old fellow emerged from behind a lilac-bush with a guilty yet excited air.

"Young man, I ain't given to eavesdropping, but I was strollin' along here and I heered it all; and as I was calcula-

tin' to give my niece a present—" He broke off and laid a hand on Joe's arm. "Where is that dod-blasted fool of a Lanham? I'll pay him; then I'll break every bone in his dum body!" he exclaimed, waxing profane. "Come here disturbin' decent folks' weddin's! Where is he?"

He started off down the path, striking out savagely with his stick. Joe watched him a moment, then put after him, and Harry Barker followed.

"If this ain't the liveliest weddin'!"

Nevertheless, he was disappointed in his expectations of an encounter. When the trio emerged through the gap in the wall they found only Sarah Norton awaiting them.

"Lanham's come and gone," she announced. "No, I didn't give him a thing, except a piece of my mind," she answered, in response to a look from Joe. "I told him that he was acting like a fool; that father was in for a thousand dollars to you in the fall, and that you would pay then, as you promised, and that he'd better clear out."

"Oh, if I could jest git a holt of him!" muttered Jonas Ingram.

"That seemed to sober him," continued the girl; "but he said he wasn't the only

one that had got scared; that Merrill was going for his tables and chairs; but Lanham said he'd run up to the cottage, and if he was there, he'd send him off. You see, father threw out as if he wasn't owing you anything," she added, in a lower voice, "and that's what stirred 'em up."

Joe turned white, in a sudden heat of anger—the first he had shown. "I'll stir him—" he began; then his eyes met hers. He reddened. "Oh, Sarah, I'm ever so much obliged to you!"

"It was nothing. I guess it was lucky I wasn't invited to the wedding, though." She laughed, and started away, leaving Joe abashed. She glanced back. "I hope none of this foolishness 'll reach Mis' Elsworth's ears," she called, in a friendly voice.

"I hope it won't," muttered Joe, fervently, and stood watching her till the old man pulled his sleeve.

"Lanham may not keep his word to the girl. Best go down there, hadn't we?"

The young man made no answer, but turned and ran. He longed for some one to wreak vengeance on. The other two had difficulty in keeping up with him. The first object that attracted their attention was the bureau. It was standing beside the back steps. Joe tried the door;

it was fastened. He drew forth the key and fitted it into the lock, but still the door did not yield. He turned and faced the others. *"Some one's in there!"*

Jonas Ingram broke forth into an oath. He shook his cane at the house.

"Some one's in there, and they've got the door bolted on the inside," continued Joe. His voice had a strange sound even to himself. He seemed to be looking on at his own wrath. He strode around to a window, but the blinds were closed; the blinds were closed all over the house; every door was barred. Whoever was inside was in utter darkness. Joe came back and gave the door a violent shake; then they all listened, but only the pecking of a hen along the walk broke the silence.

"I'll get a crowbar," suggested Harry, scowling in the fierce sunlight. Jonas Ingram stood with his hair blowing out from under his hat and his stick grasped firmly in his gnarled old hand. He was all ready to strike. His chin was thrust out rigidly. They both pressed close to Joe, but he did not heed them. He put one shoulder against a panel; every muscle was set.

"Whoever you are, if I have to break this door down—"

There was a soft commotion on the in-

side and the bolt was drawn. Joe, with the other two at his heels, fairly burst into the darkened place, just in time to see a white figure dart across the room and cast itself in a corner. For an instant they could only blink. The figure wrapped its white arms about some object.

"You can have everything but this table; you can't have—this." The words ended in a frightened sob.

"*Esther!*"

"*Oh, Joe!*" She struggled to her feet, then shrank back against the wall. "Oh, I didn't know it was you. Go 'way! go 'way!"

"Why, Esther, what do you mean?" He started towards her, but she turned on him.

"Where is she?"

"Where's who?"

She did not reply, but standing against the wall, she stared at him with a passionate scorn.

"You don't mean Sarah Norton?" asked Joe, slowly. Esther quivered. "Why, she came to tell me of the trouble her father was trying to get me into. But how did you come here, Esther? How did you know anything about it?"

She did not answer. Her head sank.

"How did you, Esther?"

"I saw—you in the lane," she faltered, then caught up her veil as though it had been a pinafore. Joe went up to her, and Jonas Ingram took hold of Harry Barker, and the two stepped outside, but not out of ear-shot; they were still curious. They could hear Esther's sobbing voice at intervals. "I tried to make 'em stop, but they wouldn't, and I slipped in past 'em and bolted the door; and when you came, I thought it was them—and, oh! ain't they our things, Joe?"

The old man thrust his head in at the door. "Yes," he roared, then withdrew.

"And won't they take the table away?"

"No," he roared again. "I'd just like to see 'em!"

Esther wept harder. "Oh, I wish they would; I ought to give 'em up. I didn't care for them after I thought—that. It was just that I had to have something I wouldn't let go, and I tried to think only of saving the table for the water-set."

"Come mighty near bein' no water-set," muttered Jonas to himself; then he turned to his companion. "Young man, I guess they don't need us no more," he said.

When he regained his sister-in-law's, he encountered that lady carrying a steam-

ing dish. Guests stood about under the trees or sat at the long tables.

"For mercy sakes, Jonas, have you seen Esther? She made fuss enough about havin' that dove fixed up in the parlor, and she and Joe ain't stood under it a minit yet."

"That's a fact," chuckled the old fellow. "They ain't stood under no dove of peace yet; they're just about ready to now, I reckon."

And up through the lane, all oblivious, the lovers were walking slowly. Just before they reached the gap in the wall, they paused by common consent. Cherry and apple trees drooped over the wall; these had ceased blossoming, but a tangle of wild-rose bushes was all ablush. It dropped a thick harvest of petals on the ground. Joe bent his head; and Esther, resting against his shoulder, lifted her eyes to his face. All unconsciously she took the pose of the woman in the Frohman poster. They kissed, and then went on slowly.

Cordelia's Night of Romance

BY JULIAN RALPH

CORDELIA ANGELINE MAHONEY was dressing, as she would say, "to keep a date" with a beau, who would soon be waiting on the corner nearest her home in the Big Barracks tenement-house. She smiled as she heard the shrill catcall of a lad in Forsyth Street. She knew it was Dutch Johnny's signal to Chrissie Bergen to come down and meet him at the street doorway. Presently she heard another call—a birdlike whistle—and she knew which boy's note it was, and which girl it called out of her home for a sidewalk stroll. She smiled, a trifle sadly, and yet triumphantly. She had enjoyed herself when she was no wiser and looked no higher than the younger Barracks girls, who took up the boys of the neighborhood as if there were no others.

She was in her own little dark inner room, which she shared with only two

others of the family, arranging a careful toilet by kerosene-light. The photograph of herself in trunks and tights, of which we heard in the story of Elsa Muller's hopeless love, was before her, among several portraits of actresses and salaried beauties. She had taken them out from under the paper in the top drawer of the bureau. She always kept them there, and always took them out and spread them in the lamp-light when she was alone in her room. She glanced approvingly at the portrait of herself as a picture of which she had said to more than one girlish confidante that it showed as neat a figure and as perfectly shaped limbs as any actress's she had ever seen. But the suggestion of a frown flitted across her brow as she thought how silly she was to have once been "stage-struck"—how foolish to have thought that mere beauty could quickly raise a poor girl to a high place on the stage. Julia Fogarty's case proved that. Julia and she were stage-struck together, and where was Julia—or Corynne Belvedere, as she now called herself? She started well as a figurante in a comic opera company up-town, but from that she dropped to a female minstrel troupe in the Bowery, and now, Lewy Tusch told Cordelia, she was "tooing ter skirt-tance

in ter pickernic parks for ter sick-baby fund, ant passin' ter hat arount afterwarts." And evil was being whispered of her—a pretty high price to pay for such small success; and it must be true, because she sometimes came home late at night in cabs, which are devilish, except when used at funerals.

It was Cordelia who attracted Elsa Muller's sweetheart, Yank Hurst, to her side, and left Elsa to die yearning for his return. And it was Cordelia who threw Hurst aside when he took to drink and stabbed the young man who, during a mere walk from church, took his place beside Cordelia. And yet Cordelia was only ambitious, not wicked. Few men live who would not look twice at her. She was not of the stunted tenement type, like her friends Rosie Mulvey and Minnie Bechman and Julia Moriarty. She was tall and large and stately, and yet plump in every outline. Moreover, she had the "style" of an American girl, and looked as well in five dollars' worth of clothes—all home-made, except her shoes and stockings—as almost any girl in richer circles. It was too bad that she was called a flirt by the young men, and a stuck-up thing by the girls, when in fact she was merely more shrewd and cal-

culating than the others, who were content to drift out of the primary schools into the shops, and out of the shops into haphazard matrimony. Cordelia was not lovable, but not all of us are who may be better than she. She was monopolized by the hope of getting a man; but a mere alliance with trousers was not the sum of her hope; they must jingle with coin.

It was strange, then, that she should be dressing to meet Jerry Donahue, who was no better than gilly to the Commissioner of Public Works, drawing a small salary from a clerkship he never filled, while he served the Commissioner as a second left hand. But if we could see into Cordelia's mind we would be surprised to discover that she did not regard herself as flesh-and-blood Mahoney, but as romantic Clarice Delamour, and she only thought of Jerry as James the butler. The voracious reader of the novels of to-day will recall the story of *Clarice, or Only a Lady's-Maid,* which many consider the best of the several absorbing tales that Lulu Jane Tilley has written. Cordelia had read it twenty times, and almost knew it by heart. Her constant dream was that she could be another Clarice, and shape her life like

hers. The plot of the novel needs to be briefly told, since it guided Cordelia's course.

Clarice was maid to a wealthy society dowager. James the butler fell in love with Clarice when she first entered the household, and she, hearing the servants' gossip about James's savings and salary, had encouraged his attentions. He pressed her to marry him. But young Nicholas Stuyvesant came home from abroad to find his mother ill and Clarice nursing her. Every day he noticed the modest rosy maid moving noiselessly about like a sunbeam. Her physical perfection profoundly impressed him. In her presence he constantly talked to his mother about his admiration for healthy women. Each evening Clarice reported to him the condition of the mother, and on one occasion mentioned that she had never known ache, pain, or malady in her life. The young man often chatted with her in the drawing-room, and James the butler got his *congé*. Mr. Stuyvesant induced his mother to make Clarice her companion, and then he met her at picture exhibitions, and in Central Park by chance, and next—every one will recall the exciting scene—he paid passionate court to her "in the pink sewing-room,

where she had reclined on soft silken sofa pillows, with her tiny slippers upon the head of a lion whose skin formed a rug before her." Clarice thought him unprincipled, and repulsed him. When the widow recovered her health and went to Newport, the former maid met all society there. A gifted lawyer fell a victim to Clarice's charms, and, on a moonlit porch overlooking the sea, warned her against young Stuyvesant. On learning that the *roué* had already attempted to weaken the girl's high principles, to rescue her he made her his wife. He was soon afterward elected Mayor of New York, but remained a suitor for his beautiful wife's approbation, waiting upon her in gilded halls with the fidelity of a knight of old.

Cordelia adored Clarice and fancied herself just like her — beautiful, ambitious, poor, with a future of her own carving. Of course such a case is phenomenal. No other young woman was ever so ridiculous.

"You have on your besht dresh, Cordalia," said her mother. "It 'll soon be wore out, an' ye'll git no other, wid your father oidle, an' no wan airnin' a pinny but you an' Johnny an' Sarah Rosabel. Fwhere are ye goin'?"

"I won't be gone long," said Cordelia, half out of the hall door.

"Cordalia Angeline, darlin'," said her mother, "mind, now, doan't let them be talkin' about ye, fwherever ye go—shakin' yer shkirts an' rollin' yer eyes. It doan't luk well for a gyurl to be makin' hersel' attractive."

"Oh, mother, I'm not attractive, and you know it."

With her head full of meeting Jerry Donahue, Cordelia tripped down the four flights of stairs to the street door. As Clarice, she thought of Jerry as James the butler; in fact, all the beaux she had had of late were so many repetitions of the unfortunate James in her mind. All the other characters in her acquaintance were made to fit more or less loosely into her romance life, and she thought of everything she did as if it all happened in Lulu Jane Tilley's beautiful novel. Let the reader fancy, if possible, what a feat that must have been for a tenement girl who had never known what it was to have a parlor, in our sense of the word, who had never known courtship to be carried on indoors, except in a tenement hallway, and who had to imagine that the sidewalk flirtations of actual life were meetings in private parks, that the

wharves and public squares and tenement roofs where she had seen all the young men and women making love were heavily carpeted drawing-rooms, broad manor-house verandas, and the fragrant conservatories of luxurious mansions! But Cordelia managed all this mental necromancy easily, to her own satisfaction. And now she was tripping down the bare wooden stairs beside the dark greasy wall, and thinking of her future husband, the rich Mayor, who must be either the bachelor police captain of the precinct, or George Fletcher, the wealthy and unmarried factory-owner near by, or, perhaps, Senator Eisenstone, the district leader, who, she was forced to reflect, was an unlikely hero for a Catholic girl, since he was a Hebrew. But just as she reached the street door and decided that Jerry would do well enough as a mere temporary James the butler, and while Jerry was waiting for her on the corner, she stepped from the stoop directly in front of George Fletcher.

"Good evening," said the wealthy young employer.

"Good evening, Mr. Fletcher."

"It's very embarrassing," said Mr. Fletcher: "I know your given name—Cordelia, isn't it?—but your last na—

Oh, thank you—Miss Mahoney, of course. You know we met at that very queer wedding in the home of my little apprentice, Joe—the line-man's wedding, you know."

"Te he!" Cordelia giggled. "Wasn't that a terrible strange wedding? I think it was just terrible."

"Were you going somewhere?"

"Oh, not at all, Mr. Fletcher," with another nervous giggle or two. "I have no plans on me mind, only to get out of doors. It's terrible hot, ain't it?"

"May I take a walk with you, Miss Mahoney?"

It seemed to her that if he had called her Clarice the whole novel would have come true then and there.

"I can't be out very late, Mr. Fletcher," said she, with a giggle of delight.

"Are you sure I am not disarranging your plans? Had you no engagements?"

"Oh no," said she; "I was only going out with me lonely."

"Let us take just a short walk, then," said Fletcher; "only you must be the man and take me in charge, Miss Mahoney, for I never walked with a young lady in my life."

"Oh, certainly not; you never did—I *don't* think."

"Upon my honor, Miss Mahoney, I

know only one woman in this city—Miss Whitfield, the doctor's daughter, who lives in the same house with you; and only one other in the world—my aunt, who brought me up, in Vermont."

Well indeed did Cordelia know this. All the neighborhood knew it, and most of the other girls were conscious of a little flutter in their breasts when his eyes fell upon them in the streets, for it was the gossip of all who knew his workmen that the prosperous ladder-builder lived in his factory, where he had spent the life of a monk, without any society except of his canaries, his books, and his workmen.

"Well, I declare!" sighed Cordelia. "How terrible cunning you men are, to get up such a story to make all the girls think you're romantic!"

But, oh, how happy Cordelia was! At last she had met her prince—the future Mayor—her Sultan of the gilded halls. In that humid, sticky, midsummer heat among the tenements, every other woman dragged along as if she weighed a thousand pounds, but Cordelia felt like a feather floating among clouds.

The babel—did the reader ever walk up Forsyth Street on a hot night, into Sec-

ond Avenue, and across to Avenue A, and up to Tompkins Park? The noise of the tens of thousands on the pavements makes a babel that drowns the racket of the carts and cars. The talking of so many persons, the squalling of so many babies, the mothers scolding and slapping every third child, the yelling of the children at play, the shouts and loud repartee of the men and women—all these noises rolled together in the air makes a steady hum and roar that not even the breakers on a hard sea-beach can equal. You might say that the tenements were empty, as only the very sick, who could not move, were in them. For miles and miles they were bare of humanity, each flat unguarded and unlocked, with the women on the sidewalks, with the youngest children in arms or in perambulators, while those of the next sizes romped in the streets; with the girls and boys of fourteen giggling in groups in the doorways (the age and places where sex first asserts itself), and only the young men and women missing; for they were in the parks, on the wharves, and on the roofs, all frolicking and love-making.

And every house front was like a Russian stove, expending the heat it had sucked from the all-day sun. And

every door and window breathed bad air—air without oxygen, rich and rank and stifling.

But Cordelia was Clarice, the future Mayoress. She did not know she was picking a tiresome way around the boys at leap-frog, and the mothers and babies and baby-carriages. She did not notice the smells, or feel the bumps she got from those who ran against her. She thought she was in the blue drawing-room at Newport, where a famous Hungarian count was trilling the soft prelude to a *csárdás* on the piano, and Mr. Stuyvesant had just introduced her to the future Mayor, who was spellbound by her charms, and was by her side, a captive. She reached out her hand, and it touched Mr. Fletcher's arm (just as a ragamuffin propelled himself head first against her), and Mr. Fletcher bent his elbow, and her wrist rested in the crook of his arm. Oh, her dream was true; her dream was true!

Mr. Fletcher, on the other hand, was hardly in a more natural relation. He was trying to think how the men talked to women in all the literature he had read. The myriad jokes about the fondness of girls for ice-cream recurred to him, and he risked everything on their fidelity to fact.

"Are you fond of ice-cream?" he inquired.

"Oh no; I *don't* think," said Cordelia. "What 'll you ask next? What girl ain't crushed on ice-cream, I'd like to know?"

"Do you know of a nice place to get some?"

"Do I? The Dutchman's, on the av'-noo, another block up, is the finest in the city. You get mo—that is, you get everything 'way up in G there, with cakes on the side, and it don't cost no more than anywhere else."

So to the German's they went, and Clarice fancied herself at the Casino in Newport. All the girls around her, who seemed to be trying to swallow the spoons, took on the guise of blue-blooded belles, while the noisy boys and young men (calling out, "Hully gee, fellers! look at Nifty gittin' out der winder widout payin'!" and, "Say, Tilly, what kind er cream is dat you're feedin' your face wid?") seemed to her so many millionaires and the exquisite sons thereof. To Mr. Fletcher the German's back-yard saloon, with its green lattice walls, and its rusty dead Christmas trees in painted butter-kegs, appeared uncommonly brilliant and fine. The fact that whenever he took a

swallow of water the ice-cream turned to cold candle-grease in his mouth made no difference. He was happy, and Cordelia was in an ecstasy by the time he had paid a shock-headed, bare-armed German waiter, and they were again on the avenue side by side. She put out her hand and rested it on his arm again—to make sure she was Clarice.

One would like to know whether, in the breasts of such as these, familiar environment exerts any remarkable influence. If so, it could have been in but one direction. For that part of town was one vast nursery. Everywhere, on every side, were the swarming babies—a baby for every flag-stone in the pavements. Babies and babies, and little besides babies, except larger children and the mothers. Perambulators with two, even three, baby passengers; mothers with as many as five children trailing after them; babies in broad baggy laps, babies at the breast, babies creeping, toppling, screaming, overflowing into the gutters. Such was the unbroken scene from the Big Barracks to Tompkins Square; ay, to Harlem and to the East River, and almost to Broadway. In the park, as if the street scenes had been merely preliminary, the paths were alive, wriggling, with babies

of every age, from the new-born to the children in pigtails and knickerbockers —and, lo! these were already paired and practising at courtship. The walk that Cordelia was taking was amid a fever, a delirium, of maternity—a rhapsody, a baby's opera, if one considered its noise. In that vast region no one inquired whether marriage was a failure. Nothing that is old and long-beloved and human is a failure there.

In Tompkins Park, while they dodged babies and stepped around babies and over them, they saw many happy couples on the settees, and they noticed that often the men held their arms around the waists of their sweethearts. Girls, too, in other instances, leaned loving heads against the young men's breasts, blissfully regardless of publicity. They passed a young man and a woman kissing passionately, as kissing is described by unmarried girl novelists. Cordelia thought it no harm to nudge Mr. Fletcher and whisper:

"Sakes alive! They're right in it, ain't they. 'It's funny when you feel that way,' ain't it?"

As many another man who does not know the frankness and simplicity of the plain people might have done, Mr. Fletcher misjudged the girl. He thought her

the sort of girl he was far from seeking. He grew instantly cold and reserved, and she knew, vaguely, that she had displeased him.

"I think people who make love in public should be locked up," said he.

"Some folks wants everybody put away that enjoys themselves," said Cordelia. Then, lest she had spoken too strongly, she added, "Present company not intended, Mr. Fletcher, but you said that like them mission folks that come around praising themselves and tellin' us all we're wicked."

"And do you think a girl can be good who behaves so in public?"

"I know plenty that's done it," said she; "and I don't know any girls but what's good. They 'ain't got wings, maybe, but you don't want to monkey with 'em, neither."

He recollected her words for many a year afterward and pondered them, and perhaps they enlarged his understanding. She also often thought of his condemnation of love-making out-of-doors. Kissing in public, especially promiscuous kissing, she knew to be a debatable pastime, but she also knew that there was not a flat in the Big Barracks in which a girl could carry on a courtship. Fancy her attempt-

ing it in her front room, with the room choked with people, with the baby squalling, and her little brothers and sisters quarrelling, with her mother entertaining half a dozen women visitors with tea or beer, and with a man or two dropping in to smoke with her father! Parlor courtship was to her, like precise English, a thing only known in novels. The thought of novels floated her soul back into the dream state.

"I think Cordelia's a pretty name," said Fletcher, cold at heart but struggling to be companionable.

"I don't," said Cordelia. "I'm not at all crushed on it. Your name's terrible pretty. I think my three names looks like a map of Ireland when they're written down. I know a killin' name for a girl. It's Clarice. Maybe some day I'll give you a dare. I'll double dare you, maybe, to call me Clarice."

Oh, if he only would, she thought—if he would only call her so now! But she forgot how unelastic his strange routine of life must have left him, and she did not dream how her behavior in the park had displeased him.

"Cordelia is a pretty name," he repeated. "At any rate, I think we should try to make the most and best of whatever

name has come to us. I wouldn't sail under false colors for a minute."

"Oh!" said she, with a giggle to hide her disappointment; "you're so terrible wise! When you talk them big words you can pass me in a walk."

Anxious to display her great conquest to the other girls of the Barracks neighborhood, Cordelia persuaded Mr. Fletcher to go to what she called "the dock," to enjoy the cool breath of the river. All the piers and wharves are called "docks" by the people. Those which are semi-public and are rented to miscellaneous excursion and river steamers are crowded nightly.

The wharf to which our couple strolled was a mere flooring above the water, edged with a stout string-piece, which formed a bench for the mothers. They were there in groups, some seated on the string-piece with babes in arms or with perambulators before them, and others, facing these, standing and joining in the gossip, and swaying to and fro to soothe their little ones. Those who gave their offspring the breast did so publicly, unembarrassed by a modesty they would have considered false. A few youthful couples, boy by girl and girl by boy, sat on the string-piece and whispered, or bandied fun with those other lovers who

patrolled the flooring of the wharf. A "gang" of rude young men—toughs—walked up and down, teasing the girls, wrestling, scuffling, and roaring out bad language. Troops of children played at leap-frog. high-spy, jack-stones, bean-bag, hop-scotch, and tag. At the far end of the pier some young men and women waltzed, while a lad on the string-piece played for them on his mouth-organ. A steady, cool, vivifying breeze from the bay swept across the wharf and fanned all the idlers, and blew out of their heads almost all recollection of the furnacelike heat of the town.

Cordelia forgot her desire to display her conquest. She forgot her true self. She likened the wharf to that "lordly veranda overlooking the sea," where the future Mayor begged Clarice to be his bride. She knew just what she would say when her prince spoke his lines. She and Mr. Fletcher were just about to seat themselves on the great rim of the wharf, when an uproar of the harsh, froglike voices of half-grown men caused them to turn around. They saw Jerry Donahue striding towards them, but with difficulty, because half a dozen lads and youths were endeavoring to hold him back.

"Dat's Mr. Fletcher," they said. "It

ain't his fault, Jerry. He's dead square; he's a gent, Jerry."

The politician's gilly tore himself away from his friends. The gang of toughs gathered behind the others. Jerry planted himself in front of Cordelia. Evidently he did not know the submissive part he should have played in Cordelia's romance. James the butler made no outbreak, but here was Jerry angry through and through.

"You didn't keep de date wid me," he began.

"Oh, Jerry, I did—I tried to, but you—" Cordelia was red with shame.

"The hell you did! Wasn't I—"

"Here!" said Mr. Fletcher; "you can't swear at this lady."

"Why wouldn't I?" Jerry asked. "What would you do?"

"He's right, Jerry. Leave him be—see?" said the chorus of Jerry's friends.

"A-a-a-h!" snarled Jerry. "Let him leave me be, then. Cordelia, I heard you was a dead fraud, an' now I know it, and I'm a-tellin' you so, straight—see? I was a-waitin' 'cross der street, an' I seen you come out an' meet dis mug, an' you never turned yer head to see was I on me post. I seen dat, an' I'm a-tellin' yer friend just der kind of a racket you give me, der

same's you've give a hundred other fellers. Den, if he likes it he knows what he's gittin'."

Jerry was so angry that he all but pushed his distorted face against that of the humiliated girl as he denounced her. Mr. Fletcher gently moved her backward a step or two, and advanced to where she had stood.

"That will do," he said to Jerry. "I want no trouble, but you've said enough. If there's more, say it to me."

"A-a-a-h!" exclaimed the gilly, expectorating theatrically over his shoulder. "Me friends is on your side, an' I ain't pickin' no muss wid you. But she's got der front of der City Hall to do me like she done. And say, fellers, den she was goin' ter give me a song an' dance 'bout lookin' fer me. Ba-a-a! She knows my 'pinion of her—see?"

The crowd parted to let Mr. Fletcher finish his first evening's gallantry to a lady by escorting Cordelia to her home. It was a chilly and mainly a silent journey. Cordelia falteringly apologized for Jerry's misbehavior, but she inferred from what Mr. Fletcher said that he did not fully join her in blaming the angry youth. Mr. Fletcher touched her fingertips in bidding her good-night, and noth-

ing was said of a meeting in the future. Clarice was forgotten, and Cordelia was not only herself again, but quite a miserable self, for her sobs awoke the little brother and sister who shared her bed.

The Prize-Fund Beneficiary

BY E. A. ALEXANDER

MISS SNELL began to apologize for interrupting the work almost before she came in. The Painter, who grudgingly opened one half of the folding-door wide enough to let her pass into the studio, was annoyed to observe that, in spite of her apologies, she was loosening the furs about her throat as if in preparation for a lengthy visit. Then for the first time, behind her tall, black-draped figure, he caught sight of her companion, who was shorter, and whose draperies were of a less ample character — for Miss Snell, being tall and thin, resorted to voluminous garments to conceal her slimness of person. A large plumed hat accentuated her sallowness and sharpness of feature, and her dark eyes, set under heavy black brows, intensified her look of unhealthy pallor.

She was perfectly at her ease, and

introduced her companion, Miss Price, in a few words, explaining that the latter had come over for a year or so to study, and was anxious to have the best advice about it.

"So I brought her straight here," Miss Snell announced, triumphantly.

Miss Price seemed a trifle overcome by the novelty of her surroundings, but managed to say, in a high nasal voice, that she had already begun to work at Julian's, but did not find it altogether satisfactory.

The Painter, looking at her indifferently, was roused to a sudden interest by her face. Her features and complexion were certainly pleasing, but the untidy mass of straggling hair topped by a battered straw sailor hat diverted the attention of a casual observer from her really unusual delicacy of feature and coloring. She was tall and slim, although now she was dwarfed by Miss Snell's gaunt figure. A worn dress and shabby green cape fastened at the neck by a button hanging precariously on its last thread completed her very unsuitable winter attire.

Outside the great studio window a cold December twilight was settling down over roofs covered with snow and icicles, and

the Painter shivered involuntarily as he noticed the insufficiency of her wraps for such weather, and got up to stir the fire which glowed in the big stove.

In one corner his model waited patiently for the guests to depart, and he now dismissed her for the day, eliciting faint protestations from Miss Snell, who, however, was settling down comfortably in an easy-chair by the fire, with an evident intention of staying indefinitely. Miss Price's large, somewhat expressionless blue eyes were taking in the whole studio, and the Painter could feel that she was distinctly disappointed by her inspection. She had evidently anticipated something much grander, and this bare room was not the ideal place she had fancied the studio of a world-renowned painter would prove to be.

Bare painted walls, a peaked roof with a window reaching far overhead, a polished floor, one or two chairs and a divan, the few necessary implements of his profession, and many canvases faced to the wall, but little or no bric-à-brac or delightful studio properties. The Painter was also conscious that her inspection included him personally, and was painfully aware that she was regarding him with the same feeling of disappointment; she

quite evidently thought him too young and insignificant looking for a person of his reputation.

Miss Snell had not given him time to reply to Miss Price's remark about her study at Julian's, but prattled on about her own work and the unsurmountable difficulties that lay in the way of a woman's successful career as a painter.

"I have been studying for years under —— ——," said Miss Snell, "and really I have no time to lose. It will end by my simply going to him and saying, quite frankly: 'Now, Monsieur ——, I have been in your atelier for four years, and I can't afford to waste another minute. There are no two ways about it. You positively must tell me how to do it. You really must not keep me waiting any longer. I insist upon it.' How discouraging it is!" she sighed. "It seems quite impossible to find any one who is willing to give the necessary information."

Miss Price's wandering eyes had at last found a resting-place on a large, half-finished canvas standing on an easel. Something attractive in the pose and turn of her head made the Painter watch her as he lent a feeble attention to Miss Snell's conversation.

Miss Price's lips were very red, and the

clear freshness of extreme youth bloomed in her cheeks; she was certainly charming. During one of Miss Snell's rare pauses she spoke, and her thin high voice came with rather a shock from between her full lips.

"May I look?" was her unnecessary question, for her eyes had never left the canvas on the easel since they had first rested there. She rose as she spoke, and went over to the painting.

The Painter pulled himself out of the cushions on the divan where he had been lounging, and went over to push the big canvas into a better light. Then he stood, while the girl gazed at it, saying nothing, and apparently oblivious to everything but the work before him.

He was roused, not by Miss Price, who remained admiringly silent, but by the enraptured Miss Snell, who had also risen, gathering furs and wraps about her, and was now ecstatically voluble in her admiration. English being insufficient for the occasion, she had to resort to French for the expression of her enthusiasm.

The Painter said nothing, but watched the younger girl, who turned away at last with a sigh of approbation. He was standing under the window, leaning against a table littered with paints and brushes.

"Stay where you are!" exclaimed Miss Snell, excitedly. "Is he not charming, Cora, in that half-light? You must let me paint you just so some day—you must indeed." She clutched Miss Price and turned her forcibly in his direction.

The Painter, confused by this unexpected onslaught, moved hastily away and busied himself with a pretence of clearing the table.

"I—I should be delighted," he stammered, in his embarrassment, and he caught Miss Price's eye, in which he fancied a smile was lurking.

"But you have not given Miss Price a word of advice about her work," said Miss Snell, as she fastened her wraps preparatory to departure. She seemed quite oblivious to the fact that she had monopolized all the conversation herself.

He turned politely to Miss Price, who murmured something about Julian's being so badly ventilated, but gave him no clew as to her particular branch of the profession. Miss Snell, however, supplied all details. It seemed Miss Price was sharing Miss Snell's studio, having been sent over by the Lynxville, Massachusetts, Sumner Prize Fund, for which she had successfully competed, and which pro-

vided a meagre allowance for two years' study abroad.

"She wants to paint heads," said Miss Snell; and in reply to a remark about the great amount of study required to accomplish this desire, surprised him by saying, "Oh, she only wants to paint them well enough to teach, not well enough to sell."

"I'll drop in and see your work some afternoon," promised the Painter, warmed by their evident intention of leaving; and he escorted them to the landing, warning them against the dangerous steepness of his stairway, which wound down in almost murky darkness.

Ten minutes later the centre panel of his door displayed a card bearing these words: "At home only after six o'clock."

"I wonder I never thought of doing this before," he reflected, as he lit a cigarette and strolled off to a neighboring restaurant; "I am always out by that hour."

Several weeks elapsed before he saw Miss Price again, for he promptly forgot his promise to visit her studio and inspect her work. His own work was very absorbing just then, and the short winter days all too brief for its accomplishment. He was struggling to complete the large

canvas that Miss Snell had so volubly admired during her visit, and it really seemed to be progressing. But the weather changed suddenly from frost to thaw, and he woke one morning to find little runnels of dirty water coursing down his window and dismally dripping into the muddy street below. It made him feel blue, and his big picture, which had seemed so promising the day before, looked hopelessly bad in this new mood. So he determined to take a day off, and, after his coffee, strolled out into the Luxembourg Gardens. There the statues were green with mouldy dampness, and the paths had somewhat the consistency of very thin oatmeal porridge. Suddenly the sun came out brightly, and he found a partially dry bench, where he sat down to brood upon the utter worthlessness of things in general and the Luxembourg statuary in particular. The sunny façade of the palace glittered in the brightness. One of his own pictures hung in its gallery. "It is bad," he said to himself, "hopelessly bad," and he gloomily felt the strongest proof of its worthlessness was its popularity with the public. He would probably go on thinking this until the weather or his mood changed.

As his eyes strayed from the palace, he

glanced up a long vista between leafless trees and muddy grass-plats. A familiar figure in a battered straw hat and scanty green cloak was advancing in his direction; the wind, blowing back the fringe of disfiguring short hair, disclosed a pure unbroken line of delicate profile, strangely simple, and recalling the profiles in Botticelli's lovely fresco in the Louvre. Miss Price, for it was she, carried a painting-box, and under one arm a stretcher that gave her infinite trouble whenever the wind caught it. As she passed, the Painter half started up to join her, but she gave him such a cold nod that his intention was nipped in the bud. He felt snubbed, and sank back on his bench, taking a malicious pleasure in observing that, womanlike, she ploughed through all the deepest puddles in her path, making great splashes about the hem of her skirt, that fluttered out behind her as she walked, for her hands were filled, and she had no means of holding it up.

The Painter resented his snubbing. He was used to the most humble deference from the art students of the quarter, who hung upon his slightest word, and were grateful for every stray crumb of his attention.

He now lost what little interest he had

previously taken in his surroundings. Just before him in a large open space reserved for the boys to play handball was a broken sheet of glistening water reflecting the blue sky, the trees rattled their branches about in the wind, and now and then a tardy leaf fluttered down from where it had clung desperately late into the winter. The gardens were almost deserted. It was too early for the throng of beribboned nurses and howling infants who usually haunt its benches. One or two pedestrians hurried across the garden, evidently taking the route to make short-cuts to their destinations, and not for the pleasure of lounging among its blustery attractions.

After idling an hour on his bench, he went to breakfast with a friend who chanced to live conveniently near, and where he made himself very disagreeable by commenting unfavorably on the work in progress and painting in particular. Then he brushed himself up and started off for the rue Notre Dame des Champs, where Miss Snell's studio was situated. It was one of a number huddled together in an old and rather dilapidated building, and the porter at the entrance gave him minute directions as to its exact location, but after stumbling up three flights of

dark stairs he had no trouble in finding it, for Miss Snell's name, preceded by a number of initials, shone out from a door directly in front of him as he reached the landing.

He knocked, and for several minutes there was a wild scurrying within and a rattle and clash of crockery. Then Miss Snell appeared at the door, and exclaimed, in delighted surprise:

"How *do* you do? We had quite given you up."

She looked taller and longer than ever swathed in a blue painting-apron and grasping her palette and brushes. She had to apologize for not shaking hands with him, because her fingers were covered with paint that had been hastily but ineffectually wiped off on a rag before she answered his knock.

He murmured something about not coming before because of his work, but she would not let him finish, saying, intensely,

"We know how precious every minute is to you."

Miss Price came reluctantly forward and shook hands; she had evidently not been painting, for her fingers were quite clean. Short ragged hair once more fell over her forehead, and the Painter felt a

shock of disappointment, and wondered why he had thought her so fine when she passed him in the morning.

"I was just going to paint Cora," announced Miss Snell. "She is taking a holiday this afternoon, and we were hunting for a pose when you knocked."

"Don't let me interrupt you," he said, smiling. "Perhaps I can help."

Miss Snell was in a flutter at once, and protested that she should be almost afraid to work while he was there.

"In that case I shall leave at once," he said; but his chair was comfortable, and he made no motion to go.

"What a queer little place it is!" he reflected, as he looked about. "All sorts of odds and ends stuck about helter-skelter, and the house-keeping things trying to masquerade as bric-à-brac."

Cora Price looked decidedly sulky when she realized that the Painter intended to stay, and seeing this he became rooted in his intention. He wondered why she took this particular attitude towards him, and concluded she was piqued because of his delay in calling. She acted like a spoiled child, and caused Miss Snell, who was overcome by his condescension in staying, no little embarrassment.

It was quite evident from her behavior

that Miss Price was impressed with her own importance as the beneficiary of the Lynxville Prize Fund, and would require the greatest deference from her acquaintances in consequence.

"Here, Cora, try this," said Miss Snell, planting a small three-legged stool on a rickety model-stand.

"Might I make a suggestion?" said the Painter, coolly. "I should push back all the hair on her forehead; it gives a finer line."

"Why, of course!" said Miss Snell. "I wonder we never thought of that before. Cora dear, you are much better with your hair back."

Cora said nothing, but the Botticelli profile glowered ominously against a background of sage-green which Miss Snell was elaborately draping behind it.

"If I might advise again," the Painter said, "I would take that down and paint her quite simply against the gray wall."

Miss Snell was quite willing to adopt every suggestion. She produced her materials and a fresh canvas, and began making a careful drawing, which, as it progressed, filled the Painter's soul with awe.

"I feel awfully like trying it myself,"

he said, after watching her for a few moments. "Can I have a bit of canvas?"

"Take anything," exclaimed Miss Snell; and he helped himself, refusing the easel which she wanted to force upon him, and propping his little stretcher up on a chair. Miss Snell stopped her drawing to watch him commence. It made her rather nervous to see how much paint he squeezed out on the palette; it seemed to her a reckless prodigality.

He eyed her assortment of brushes dubiously, selecting three from the draggled limp collection.

Cora was certainly a fine subject, in spite of her sulkiness, and he grew absorbed in his work, and painted away, with Miss Snell at his elbow making little staccato remarks of admiration as the sketch progressed. Suddenly he jumped up, realizing how long he had kept the young model.

"Dear me," he cried, "you must be exhausted!" and he ran to help her down from the model-stand.

She did look tired, and Miss Snell suggested tea, which he stayed to share. Cora became less and less sulky, and when at last he remembered that he had come to see her work, she produced it with less unwillingness than he had expected.

He was rather floored by her productions. As far as he could judge from what she showed him, she was hopelessly without talent, and he could only wonder which of these remarkably bad studies had won for her the Lynxville Sumner Prize Fund.

He tried to give her some advice, and was thanked when she put her things away.

Then they all looked at his sketch, which Miss Snell pronounced "too charming," and Cora plainly thought did not do her justice.

"I wish you would pose a few times for me, Miss Price," he said, before leaving. "I should like very much to paint you, and it would be doing me a great favor."

The girl did not respond to this request with any eagerness. He fancied he could see she was feeling huffy again at his meagre praise of her work.

Miss Snell, however, did not allow her to answer, but rapturously promised that Cora should sit as often as he liked, and paid no attention to the girl's protest that she had no time to spare.

"This has been simply in-spiring!" said Miss Snell, as she bade him good-bye, and he left very enthusiastic about Cora's

profile, and with his hand covered with paint from Miss Snell's door-knob.

In spite of Miss Snell's assurance that Cora would pose, the Painter was convinced that she would not, if a suitable excuse could be invented. Feeling this, he wrote her a most civil note about it. The answer came promptly, and did not surprise him.

She was very sorry indeed, but she had no leisure hours at her disposal, and although she felt honored, she really could not do it. This was written on flimsy paper, in a big unformed handwriting, and it caused him to betake himself once more to Miss Snell's studio, where he found her alone—Cora was at Julian's.

She promised to beg Cora to pose, and accepted an invitation for them to breakfast with him in his studio on the following Sunday morning.

He carefully explained to her that his whole winter's work depended upon Cora's posing for him. He half meant it, having been seized with the notion that her type was what he needed to realize a cherished ideal, and he told this to Miss Snell, and enlarged upon it until he left her rooted in the conviction that he was hopelessly in love with Cora—a fact she

imparted to that young woman on her return from Julian's.

Cora listened very placidly, and expressed no astonishment. He was not the first by any means; other people had been in love with her in Lynxville, Massachusetts, and she confided the details of several of these love-affairs to Miss Snell's sympathetic ears during the evening.

Meanwhile, the Painter did nothing, and a fresh canvas stood on his easel when the girls arrived for breakfast on Sunday morning. The big unfinished painting was turned to the wall; he had lost all interest in it.

"When I fancy doing a thing I am good for nothing else," he explained to Cora, after she had promised him a few sittings. "So you are really saving me from idleness by posing."

Cora laughed, and was silent. The Painter blessed her for not being talkative; her nasal voice irritated him, although her beautiful features were a constant delight.

Miss Snell had succeeded in permanently eliminating the disfiguring bang, and her charming profile was left unmarred.

"I want to paint you just as you are," he said, and noticing that she looked

rather disdainfully at her shabby black cashmere, added, "The black of your dress could not be better."

"We thought," said Miss Snell, deprecatingly, "that you might like a costume. We could easily arrange one."

"Not in the least necessary," said the Painter. "I have set my heart on painting her just as she is."

The girls were disappointed in his want of taste. They had had visions of a creation in which two Liberty scarfs and a velveteen table cover were combined in a felicitous harmony of color.

"When can I have the first sitting?" he asked.

"Tuesday, I think," said Miss Snell, reflectively.

"Heavens!" thought the Painter. "Is Miss Snell coming with her?" And the possibility kept him in a state of nervousness until Tuesday afternoon, when Cora appeared, accompanied by the inevitable Miss Snell.

It turned out, however, that the latter could not stay. She would call for Cora later; just now her afternoons were occupied. She was doing a pastel portrait in the Champs Elysées quarter, so she reluctantly left, to the Painter's great relief.

He did not make himself very agree-

able during the sittings which followed. He was apt to get absorbed in his work and to forget to say anything. Then Miss Snell would appear to fetch her friend, and he would apologize for being so dull, and Cora would remark that she enjoyed sitting quietly, it rested her after the noise and confusion at Julian's.

"If she talked much I could not paint her, her voice is so irritating," he confided to a friend who was curious and asked all sorts of questions about his new sitter.

The work went well but slowly, for Cora sat only twice a week. She felt obliged to devote the rest of her time to study, as she was living on the prize fund, and she even had qualms of conscience about the two afternoons she gave up to the sittings.

During all this time Miss Snell continued to weave chapters of romance about Cora and the Painter, and the girls talked things over after each sitting when they were alone together.

Spring had appeared very early in the year, and the public gardens and boulevards were richly green. Chestnut-trees blossomed and gaudy flower-beds bloomed in every square. The Salons opened, and were thronged with an enthusiastic

public, although the papers as usual denounced them as being the poorest exhibitions ever given.

The Painter had sent nothing, being completely absorbed in finishing Cora's portrait, to the utter exclusion of everything else.

Cora did the exhibitions faithfully. It was one of the duties she owed to the Lynxville fund, and which she diligently carried out. The Painter bothered and confused her by many things; he persistently admired all the pictures she liked least, and praised all those she did not care for. She turned pale with suppressed indignation when he differed from her opinion, and resented his sweeping contempt of her criticisms.

On the strength of a remittance from the prize fund, and in honor of the season, she discarded the sailor hat for a vivid ready-made creation smacking strongly of the Bon Marché. The weather was warm, and Cora wore mitts, which the Painter thought unpardonable in a city where gloves are particularly cheap. The mitts were probably fashionable in Lynxville, Massachusetts. Miss Snell, who rustled about in stiff black silk and bugles, seemed quite oblivious to her friend's want of taste; she was all

excitement, for her pastel portrait—by some hideous mistake—had been accepted and hung in one of the exhibitions, and the girls went together on varnishing-day to see it. There they met the Painter prowling aimlessly about, and Miss Snell was delighted to note his devotion to Cora. It was a strong proof of his attachment to her, she thought. The truth was he felt obliged to be civil after her kindness in posing. He wished he could repay her in some fashion, but since his first visit to Miss Snell's she had never offered to show him her work again, or asked his advice in any way, and he felt a delicacy about offering his services as a teacher when she gave him so little encouragement. He fancied, too, that she did not take much interest in his work, and knew she did not appreciate his portrait of her, which was by far the best thing he had ever done.

Her lack of judgment vexed him, for he knew the value of his work, and every day his fellow-painters trooped in to see it, and were loud in their praises. It would certainly be the *clou* of any exhibition in which it might be placed.

During one sitting Cora ventured to remark that she thought it a pity he did not intend to make the portrait more

complete, and suggested the addition of various accessories which in her opinion would very much improve it.

"It's by far the most complete thing I have ever done," he said. "I sha'n't touch it again," and he flung down his brushes in a fit of temper.

She looked at him contemptuously, and putting on her hat, left the studio without another word; and for several weeks he did not see her again.

Then he met her in the street, and begged her to come and pose for a head in his big picture, which he had taken up once more. His apologies were so abject that she consented, but she ceased to be punctual, and he never could feel quite sure that she would keep her appointments.

Sometimes he would wait a whole afternoon in vain, and one day when she failed to appear at the promised hour he shut up his office and strolled down to the Seine. There he caught sight of her with a gay party who were about to embark on one of the little steamers that ply up and down the river.

He shook his fist at her from the quay where he stood, and watched her and her party step into the boat from the pier.

"She thinks little enough of the Lynx-

ville Prize Fund when she wants an outing," he said to himself, scornfully.

After fretting a little over his wasted afternoon, he forgot all about her, and set to work with other models. Then he left Paris for the summer.

A few hours after his return, early in the fall, there came a knock at his door. He had been admiring Cora's portrait, which to his fresh eye looked exceptionally good.

Miss Snell, with eyes red and tearful, stood on his door-mat when he answered the tap.

"Poor dear Cora," she said, had received a notice from the Lynxville committee that they did not consider her work sufficiently promising to continue the fund another year.

"She will have to go home," sobbed Miss Snell, but said: "I am forced to admit that Cora has wasted a good deal of time this summer. She is so young, and needs a little distraction now and then," and she appealed to the Painter for confirmation of this undoubted fact.

He was absent-minded, but assented to all she said. In his heart he thought it a fortunate thing that the prize fund should

be withdrawn. One female art student the less: he grew pleased with the idea. Cora had ceased to interest him as an individual, and he considered her only as one of an obnoxious class.

"I thought you ought to be the first to know about it," said Miss Snell, confidentially, "because you might have some plan for keeping her over here." Miss Snell looked unutterable things that she did not dare to put into words.

She made the Painter feel uncomfortable, she looked so knowing, and he became loud in his advice to send Cora home at once.

"Pack her off," he cried. "She is wasting time and money by staying. She never had a particle of talent, and the sooner she goes back to Lynxville the better."

Miss Snell shrank from his vehemence, and wished she had not insisted upon coming to consult him. She had assured Cora that the merest hint would bring matters to a crisis. Cora would imagine that she had bungled matters terribly, and she was mortified at the thought of returning with the news of a repulse.

As soon as she had gone, the Painter felt sorry he had been so hasty. He had

bundled her unceremoniously out of the studio, pleading important work.

He called twice in the rue Notre Dame des Champs, but the porter would never let him pass her lodge, and he at last realized that she had been given orders to that effect. A judicious tip extracted from her the fact that Miss Price expected to leave for America the following Saturday, and, armed with an immense bouquet, he betook himself to the St. Lazare station at the hour for the departure of the Havre express.

He arrived with only a minute to spare before the guard's whistle was answered by the mosquitolike pipe that sets the train in motion.

The Botticelli profile was very haughty and cold. Miss Snell was there, of course, bathed in tears. He had just time enough to hand in his huge bouquet through the open window before the train started. He caught one glimpse of an angry face within, when suddenly his great nosegay came flying out of the compartment, and striking him full in the face, spread its shattered paper and loosened flowers all over the platform at his feet.

THE END